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# HOURS OF THOUGHT

ON

## SACRED THINGS.

VOL. II.

BY

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Οὐ χρὴ κατὰ τοὺς παραινούντας ἀνθρώπινα φρονεῖν ἄνθρωπον ὄντα οὐδὲ θνητὰ τὸν θνητόν,  
ἀλλ' ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν.—ARIST. *Eth. Nic.* X. vii. 8.

Jeder hat einen beschränkten Gesichtskreis, dessen Auge nicht bis zu Gott  
hindurchdringt.—RICHARD ROTHE: *Stille Stunden*, 194.

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## P R E F A C E.

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IN answering the call for a second volume of "Hours of Thought," I have allowed myself a slight variation in the rule of selection for its contents. The book was sent forth at first, and is sent forth again, in the midst of an intellectual conflict involving no less than the continued existence of any Christendom at all. Wearied with the clang of the opposing pleas, and noticing that disputes are seldom settled till their arguments are forgotten, I thought my best offering to the needs of our time would be a volume in aid of personal religion, and admitting no polemic tone to break the harmony of simple trusts and natural piety. The same feeling has brought together by far the greater part of the materials of the present volume. But in a few instances a place has been allowed to theoretical reasonings and expositions, when they seemed indispensable in support of some practical appeal to the conscience and affections. In an age when the language of religion is usurped by systems which discard its characteristic conceptions, it becomes impossible to guide the heart and strengthen the will without clearing the thought. And it is a sufficient justification of an occasional resort to metaphysical distinctions, that a confused use

of words often fosters the most groundless antipathies, and may even wear away and destroy the devout habits of a life. The few critical discussions comprised in the following pages no reader, I trust, will find carried beyond the exigencies of some important moral or spiritual lesson.

I have often been asked, by those who interpret Christian rites by a Sacramental theory, what meaning can be attached to the Communion Service by persons who, like myself, disown that theory, and who, further, see no Vicarious Atonement accomplished on Calvary. The answer is perhaps most simply given by the contents of the Service itself when performed under such conditions. I have therefore, with a view to such enquirers, placed at the end of this volume one or two Addresses written for this commemoration. And, for the sake of still greater explicitness, I have prefixed to them another, delivered to a class of young persons on the eve of their first Communion. It had been preceded by a course of weekly lectures, extending through nine months, on the History of the Eucharist; the impression of which had divided my hearers into two classes, viz. those who shrunk from a usage so rarely clear of superstition; and those who were drawn to the commemoration by its inherent beauty and significance. To the latter the words now printed, under the title of "Confirmation Address," were spoken before going into Church on the Sunday morning.

LONDON, November 20, 1879.

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# HOURS OF THOUGHT.

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## I.

### The Spirit of Trust.

---

PSALM cxii. 7.

“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”

*Trust* is the belief of another's goodness on the inspiration of your own. The moment you ask for other grounds than this, and withhold your reliance till it can rest upon external proof, you cease to trust, and stipulate for knowledge. On the other hand, if the confiding temper is so dominant as to blind you to opposing evidence and refuse the correction of positive experience, it becomes a weak credulity. In both extremes the pure soul breaks with the clear intellect; becoming its slave in the one case, and its tyrant in the other. The genuine sphere of trust is found in neutral instances, where outward proof is absent or

in equipoise, and the presumptions of right affection have the undisputed field to themselves. And even then, it is not a mere arbitrary hypothesis, pleasantly flung across the gap of ignorance to veil it with a curtain of painted cloud; not a mere willingness to live in a happy delusion till the rough winds of reality shall dissipate it: but rather, the quick instinct by which the pure heart recognises purity, and love catches the eye of love. So that, in its true exercise, trust is the intuitive apprehension of another's goodness by the sympathetic affinities of your own.

This temper of the soul then is something quite different from knowledge; lying beneath it; going beyond it. Lying beneath it,—because, until we trust, we can never know, and the coloured glass of our predisposition will fling its hue on what we see. Going beyond it,—because, where we cease to know, we cannot cease to judge; and far out in the region of the invisible and the future, where certain perception cannot reach, there are many things which the mind must fill in from its own resources of loving wisdom or suspicious folly. Nor is this exercise of simple reliance peculiar to matters of affection and religion. Reason itself, in all its applications, must take the greatest things for granted, in order to learn the least. You cannot refer the smallest object to its place, cannot trace the summer cloud or shooting star, without believing an immensity around its track. You cannot

fix the date of the most trivial incident, without assuming an eternity in which it lies. Of Space and Time in which you have never been present, and never will be, you feel the profoundest certainty ; and finite as you are, you are assured of their infinitude. If you experiment on light, you presume that your eye is true ; if on your eye, that the light is real. There would be no wonder in the gliding heavens or the rolling sea, but for the hidden Power behind for which you look you know not why, and of which you try to speak though no sense discerns it and only thought will have it to be there. Should you in a passion have struck a guiltless child, there rushes a compunction on your heart, which takes for granted that you have abused a trust, and being free to do the better have yielded to the intrinsically worse. Whoever refuses to rest upon these natural assumptions and tries to turn them from inspirations into inferences, only bewilders himself with scepticisms and contradictions ; exaggerates his knowledge or his ignorance ; and from overvaulting ambition of science leaps sheer into nescience. It is just the deepest, the most solemn, and the holiest objects of thought, that are apprehended by this path of trust ; and when you perversely verge to either side, and will have either more or less than this, they swoon away from the dazed or the darkened eye. Those who tell me too much about God ; who speak as if they knew his

motive and his plan in everything ; who are never at a loss to name the reason of every structure and show the tender mercy of every event ; who praise the cleverness of the Eternal economy and patronise it as a master-piece of forensic ingenuity ; who carry themselves through the solemn glades of Providence with the springy step and jaunty air of a familiar ; do but drive me by the very definiteness of their assurance into an indefinite agony of doubt, and impel me to cry, “ Ask of me less, and I shall give you all.” And, on the other hand, when I commune with those who have nothing to tell me about God ; who treat the transient as the only real, and dismiss the Eternal as a negation and a dream ; who pretend to lift the veil from nature and show us that there is No One there ; who see on the brow of heaven no trace of thought, and in the beauty of a saint only the working of a vital chemistry, and in the historical development of humanity a mere frondescence from the circulating sap of civilization ; when, without once appealing to my faith, they account for everything *except this clinging faith itself* ;—this little residual exception spoils all their work ; and, in proportion to their success in bewildering my understanding, plunges me into the mood of enthusiasm as an escape from an empty despair. Trust is the natural attitude of the soul towards things diviner than herself ; and cannot be pushed aside by the rude pretensions either of knowledge or of ignorance,

without the loss of her balance and the subversion of her peace.

Trust arises from the mind's instinctive feeling after *fixed realities*, after the substance of every shadow, the base of all appearance, the everlasting amid change. All that we learn by Sense or Consciousness is fleeting and relative : what we see is the shooting light ; what we hear, the momentary sound ; what we feel in ourselves is the passing thought that rises and is gone. Even when the fact holds on, it is only to vanish at a later date ; and the more evanescent displays itself on a theatre which is a little less : the human thought, which is the work of a moment, belongs to a life, which is only for years ; and this single life is an element in the history of humanity whose time-piece goes by centuries ; and our race itself fills but a chapter in the physical records of this planet ; which again is part of a system having an elder nativity ; though still the solar cycle is but an incident in the courses of the stellar light. Observe and scrutinize as we may, this is all that Sense can find,—the more transient within the less, wheel within wheel ; the widest, as compared with the least, being only the more comprehensive phenomenon. But it is not given us to judge by sense alone. In a mere flowing of phenomena without a fountain and without a bed, in facts ever on the migratory wing beating no omnipresent air and guided by no thought

upon their path, it is impossible for us to find rest ; and higher powers than sense supply us with permanent objects, eternal realities, to be the source and the theatre of every change ; realities invisible, yet needful to sustain the visible ; silent, yet the birthplace of speech ; exhibited in no demonstration because the postulate of all. Thus, we have assurance of a *continuous soul* within us, to which our passing states of feeling belong ; of *material substance* as the seat, and a *Divine mind* as the enduring spring, of all physical appearance. It is because these great objects are *given*, that they cannot be *found* ; and to go out in quest of them is for Reason to play Hide and Seek with itself. To accept them with simple faith, and never give the lie to the faculties revealing them, constitutes the proper Religion of the Intellect.

Trust, however, can be exercised only towards a *Person*. It is a belief in Good, from a source competent to Evil ; and to no power but a living Mind, is that alternative, or indeed any alternative, possible. Blind force, whatever it be, can take but one direction, and turn up the results of its own necessity : it wields no preference, and leaves room for no contingency ; and did we stand face to face with nothing else than *this*, we might indeed attain to certitude ; or, from ignorance, remain in doubt ; but we could feel no trust : for that is more than a mere mental expectation ; it is a moral repose. You may expect a prize from the turn

of a lottery; but it would be absurd to say that you trust the wheel. Reliance upon natural laws, and conformity to them, is not trust; and though prudently proper, has as little to do with religion as playing at billiards, or rowing a boat. Nor has human conceit produced a more deplorable burlesque of faith and worship, than the scientific gospel of physiological self-interest, when preached as the whole duty of man. It corresponds with the attempt, in human affairs, to find a substitute for that confidence in one another's fidelity of will, which, after all, is the ultimate base of all our social life, which secures all our securities, and is the hidden ground of all our laws. As well might you disband the sentiments of honour that you might govern the world by attorneys, as exchange man's communion with the living Lord of conscience for dread of the legal writs and hovering police of the Universe. Cease to corrupt the ancient phrases of piety by telling me to "reverence the natural laws"; I am not an idolater, to worship what is below me: the laws cannot love me: they are blind as a bust, and cannot look into me: they do not know that I have found them and do not care whether I obey them: they bring me suffering and are not sorry; or relief, and feel no joy: they whirl and grind away, weaving my fortune if I am circumspect and sharp; or, if my heedless cloak should touch their shaft, picking me up and crushing every bone. No: these things for their

own sakes can be the objects of no solemn love, of no moral reliance, but only of fear, of calculation, of helpless submission ; and not till they are regarded as the finite usages of an infinite Mind, deep in holiness and beauty which they cannot adequately express, will any true devotion mingle with the thought. A person is higher than a thing ; and if, while we are persons, the ultimate power of the universe is not, it is then *we* that are supreme ; and if reverence be possible to us at all, it must seek its object, not in nature without, but in the self-conscious spirit within. This however is simply impossible : no man can venerate himself ; and the mere fact that the human heart instinctively cries aloud for leave to worship and to trust, yet cannot do so without an outer and a higher being, irresistibly postulates the personal and living God. For who can conceive, that the affections should unhesitatingly rush into religion and seize it as their home ; yet be doomed to meet there only a disconsolate emptiness ? that they should practise on us an imposture without parallel in our lower nature ? that our highest principles should be our greatest deceivers ?

Nor is it theologies alone that are concerned in repelling this absurdity. The same interpretation of life and the universe that gives birth to them is also the inspiring principle of poetry and art. To them all it is essential that a meaning, other than that of physical law, should lurk behind the veil of history



and nature and shine through. They all go to life and nature to seek there for something which the senses cannot apprehend or the sciences explain ; for glances of thought which appeal to the loving eye ; for ideal aims which gleam through the dross and dust of reality ; for the spirit of a calm heaven and a dear God beneath the rush of change and the cold neutrality of nature. Were it only inferior men and our poorer faculties that felt this divine meaning in all things and pressed into it with secret sympathy and prayer, we might not shrink from suspicion of its possible delusion. But for ourselves we surely know that it is no dozing dream : it is when we are most awake that we behold this glory ; and dull and drowsy hours bring the world back again to the common and unclean. And of other men we no less surely know that it is precisely the most largely gifted and most finely balanced, that are most profoundly aware of this expression of a divine life through all ; and so cognisant are they of its mysteries, that when once they speak and interpret it for us, we also find it to be there. And though the vision of genius, momentary perhaps and dazzling as a burst of sudden sunshine from a breezy sky, falls far short of the clear constancy of religious insight, yet its nature is essentially the same, and its existence wholly unaccountable in a universe of mere material elaboration. It is not an insignificant fact, that even what is called imitative Art is

then only successful when it seizes *first the whole idea* of the scene or object it would represent, and from this works outward into the detail; and that whoever proceeds by the inverse process, and constructs his composition piecemeal by arranging the elements of form and colour, and expects that, the parts being right, the whole cannot be wrong, does but embalm the corpse of nature instead of giving back its life. This fact is intelligible, if the true artist, in going out from the inner heart to the outer manifestation, is on the real creative track and is following the vestiges of God;—if the universe be an ideal product coloured by an infinite feeling and shaped forth by an everlasting thought;—if, being the utterance of a Mind within, it is best presented by the kindred sympathies and reverence of a Mind without. But if it were a dynamic accident or a chemical compound, if it had actually been in parts before it was a whole, if a wild population of physical forces had rushed out of their wastes and subscribed to make it, if it had no heart but the pulsations of galvanism and no meaning in the beauty and grandeur that it shows, then surely the fact would be a paradox, that he best reproduces nature who most flatly contradicts its ways.

The same is true in all the higher departments of our life. Of all great souls, of all steadfast and heroic lives, the ultimate basis is simple trust in God, and a profound sense of the divine significance and relations

of our being here. Even without any conscious and direct resort to religious sources of strength, the man who, in the midst of derision and threats, will stand to his truth, although he dies, hides in his heart a secret worship for the inner substance of things as claiming his loyalty against their empty shows. How could the lonely "martyr of science" unarmed but with the sword of his spirit, face the infuriated hosts of organized ignorance rushing to sweep him from the field, did he not feel that his back was against a rock at whose foot he might fall, but which barred alike his retreat and their advance? Why is it impossible for him to purchase liberty and life by a few false words that will betray nobody, and concern only the moon or the atmosphere which will make no complaints? In the relations of man with man, it is conceivable that mutual affection and understood compact should secure an unswerving fidelity: and when a Campanella, suspected for his gloomy prophecies, is seven times stretched upon the rack, and for twenty-seven years consigned to Neapolitan dungeons, from which at any moment he might have bought deliverance by a lie, we can understand, on simply human grounds, the indomitable refusal to invent conspiracies and label them with living names. But in the relations between man and nature, there is no such cogent affection, no such interchange of conscious obligation, to support the pleading for veracity: yet here also the reverence for truth

persists; and Copernicus, having once found for the Sun his regal seat in the heavens, felt it would be a disloyal thing to keep it secret, or drive him forth again as an exile or a wanderer. However useful to mankind this sentiment may be, as securing the successive steps of knowledge, no one in feeling it thinks of this. It is not a *social* impulse to which he yields; but an implicit and ineradicable faith that the *true is best*, and when known is *obligatory*; wielding over us an *authority* with which we have no right to tamper. The secret background of this feeling is therefore a recognition of reality as divine and as the determining source of human duty. It is an inward trust in the order of the world as truly sacred, and entitled to the unqualified homage of human thought and will.

Still more obviously does this trust lie at the foundation of character, when from the intellectual reverence for truth we pass to the moral reverence for justice. Look into the hearts of the men who, from time to time, have risen in disinterested revolt against some wrong on which the world's conscience has gone to sleep,—Wycliffe and Savonarola in the Church, Clarkson and Garrison in the State,—and ask what is the inspiration which fans their enthusiasm and renders their patience inexhaustible? Is it any reasoned estimate of what society loses by its shortcomings?—any statistical survey of avoidable mischiefs? or any measurement of their personal strength against the resistance to be overcome?

Would their zeal abate if the harm were less conspicuous? Would it quit the field, if the forces arrayed against it were more than it could meet? On the contrary they are held by an unconditional necessity which brooks no measurement and leaves no option, and which is strained, if possible, to higher intensity, if it sets them apart, and is concentrated in them alone. They are charged with an infinite commission, and its seeming impossibility does not damp, but fire them. Theirs is an act of faith; and it does not wait for a *little* mountain before it dares to say, "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea!" How then can this be? Is it mere madness that seizes on these tense and stormy wills, and spends them in a wild crusade? Must reason desert the noblest spirits, ere they can enter on the greatness of their life? Rather do they take the altitude of a higher reason, and identify themselves with a "wisdom of God" which passes for foolishness only with calculating men. They are assured of a Divine suffrage which brings to nought the most overwhelming register of human votes against them; and foresee that, however they may be baffled here and there, the everlasting stars in their courses will fight for them, and that the most reluctant powers must come round to them at last. This imperishable conviction, that if a thing is right, it will have to be, is the underlying rock on which all great character is built; and it carries in it a *trust*, implicit, if not explicit, in the moral

government of the world. This indeed it is which alone can render *absolute* the rules of righteousness, can save them from the gnawing corrosion of exceptions, and raise them from flexible convictions of men into a law secured on the eternal Holiness. Who can suppose that the mere expediency of maintaining a general maxim intact, whether it applies or not, would avail to silence interest and passion, when no other answer can be given to their plea? If the strength of a chain is that of its weakest link, the first flaw which, in a rule of right, refuses the strain put upon it, scatters the whole structure into ruin. Intellectual integrity, moral tenacity, spiritual elevation, all alike involve, in their higher degrees, an unconditional trust in the everlasting sway of divine wisdom, justice, and love. Than the ability indeed to carry this feeling through every change, to hide it in the stricken heart, to fold it round the shivering lot, to drop it as an anchor and a stay into the tempestuous sea, to subsist wholly by it and in it, be appearances what they may, there can hardly be a more genuine mark of a grand and lovely nature. This it is that gives a majesty so pure and touching to the historic figure of Christ: self-abandonment to God, uttermost surrender, without reserve or stipulation, to the guidance of the Holy Spirit from the Soul of souls; pause in no darkness, hesitation in no perplexity, recoil in no extremity of anguish; but a gentle unfaltering hold of the invisible Hand, of the Only Holy and All

Good ;—these are the features that have made Jesus of Nazareth the dearest and most sacred image to the heart of so many ages ; and could these be but a delusive show of perfection, unrelated to the system of eternal verity, human life would sink at once from the sublimest to the most pitiable of things, the inflation of a romance, the tears and raptures of a dream ; and it were then the highest wisdom, as well as the most passionate despair, to curse God and die. The very suspicion should be repelled as a temptation. Let us simply trust the good man's trusts, and fling ourselves into the Everlasting Arms that have cherished and protected the faithful and saintly of all times. Abide with us, O Lord, and breathe into us the peace of hearts stayed upon Thee !

## II.

How sayest thou, 'Shew us the Father'?

---

JOHN xiv. 8, 9.

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

THE world has been less dull of heart than Philip; and, ever since the ministry in Galilee, has well known whither to turn for the true moral image of the Father. Men would have realized these words, though they had never been spoken: it was impossible for them to be visited by the influence of a soul like Christ's without its flush of beauty suffusing their thought of God ever after. Between the highest human mind and the Divine, there lies nothing, to our apprehension, but a blank vastness,—mere metaphysical dimension,—known to our thought, but foreshortened and annihilated to the eye; like the deeps, immeasurable yet viewless, that separate the moving planet from the unchanging constellations over which it glides. We know that the interval is there; yet the nearer light gives its height



to the heaven above us, no less than the more remote : both are referred to the same infinite sphere : both, whether in our system or beyond it, belong to the divine stars, and glorify the midnight of this world ; and the gaze that follows the parallax of the one alone becomes conscious of the other's steady and eternal light. Looking along the line of Christ's life and spirit, we see the moral firmament opened, and gain insight into the dwelling-place of God. Whether we direct our view upon him, or forward, through the lustre of his thoughts, on the great Object of adoration, we find ourselves introduced into an interpretation of the Divine Nature, at once peculiar and sublime.

For instance, every disciple of Jesus must feel assurance, of a kind altogether new and characteristic, of the *Spirituality* of God. Whoever enters, with deep sympathy, into Christ's representation of his relation to the infinite Inspirer, the interfusion of the Divine Spirit with his own, the absolute *consciousness* of a heavenly guidance within him, imparting the thought of sanctity, and sustaining the will of duty, must rise above the conception of the mere physical activity of Deity, or of his judicial inspection from without, and discern him rather in the choicest powers that rule our life, the force of Truth, the authority of Conscience, the suggestions of disinterested Love ; will worship him, not simply as a past constructive Intelligence and a present Sovereign Will, but as the living Mind, enwrapping and

glorifying, as with the bright cloud of transfiguration, the summits of all created minds, and kindling them, above the cold mists of earthly thought, with light and fire divine. The spirituality which our fellowship with Christ leads us to ascribe to God is altogether peculiar; not metaphysical, but moral; not negative, but positive; not attended by any thinning away of the *personal* attributes of his nature, but rendering them more distinct and real and awful to the mind. It is not the mere denial of bodily form and material limitations to the Creator; though this also is not wanting in the incidental words of Christ,—“No man hath seen God at any time,”—“Ye have neither heard his voice nor seen his shape.” It is not a mere local ubiquity, like that of a universal atmosphere: it was the Psalmist that found he could not flee from God’s spirit: it was Christ that felt how that spirit would not flee from him; and between the extension of his Being through space, and the absence of space from his Being, between his diffusion among all things, and their concentration before him, lies much of the difference between a physical and a spiritual Theism. Nor does it consist in any cold distance from the material creation, any Platonic residence among ideas, apart from the warm earth and the common love of men, and approachable only by the moonlight track of philosophical contemplation. It separates him from nothing that he has made, and prevents not his putting a beauty and wonder into

the smallest of his works. The very grass, piercing the rough mould with its tender strength, he clothes with its spring green : the lily that toils not and cannot deck itself, he arrays with a glory that no self-adornment could approach : the bird that droops its wing and dies, falls not "without Him." The outward lot of men takes its order from his providing care : no silent ill, no grievous weight of life, no vexed thought of age, no little sorrow of the child, are foreign to the will of him by whom the hairs of the head are all numbered. The Christian truth, that "God is a Spirit," does nothing to exclude him from his lower works, or hinder us from discerning him in the glories of the earth and sky, and feeling that even through the inlets of sense he solicits entrance to the soul.

What then is the essential meaning of the Divine Spirituality in the religion of Christ? It implies simply this : that not all life is equal to him, though he regards all according to its nature : but he has disposed all things in ranks of infinite gradation ; and as they rise in spirituality, he esteems them of higher worth, and knows them nearer to himself. It is not true, as some will tell you, that his supreme height spreads all below him, from the insect to the angel, at one level of insignificance, which it were nothing to him to create or to destroy, and in which the senseless atom is as great as the teeming world. It is not true, as some will say, that all objects in this

vast whole, are but parts of a stupendous machine, differing only as the little screw from the huge fly-wheel, in size but not in value, having in no case an excellence of their own, but serving only to receive and to transmit the power that begins with Alpha and goes off into Omega. The universe is not a collection of instruments, with nothing fit to be its own end ;—not a workshop of tools for the perpetual exercise of Divine skill in lonely self-revolution ; but contains beings out of the circle of necessity and nature ;—beings qualified to be causes in themselves, to rule what is below and serve what is above, and live as the companions and the Sons of God. The balances of heaven, as well as the estimates of earth, have a scale by which all creatures have their measure taken and their Providential care apportioned. The raven that cries is of greater worth than the dumb grass ; and “ ye are better than the fowls,”—“ of more value than many sparrows.” And so, from corpuscular order to growing life ; from insentient life to craving instinct ; from blind instinct to intending thought ; from prudent thought to social love ; from unregulated love to all-directing duty ; from struggling duty to free harmony with heaven ; are the ascending steps of a progression, not shaped by any dreams of ours, but inherent in the architecture of the universe, and built of the adamant of God. And he that elevates himself to the upper stage of this ascent touches the

personal similitude of the Supreme Mind ; enters into sympathy with him ; and escapes the dull distance where lower natures taste his goodness without dwelling with him as the All-good.

This coalescence of the Divine nature exclusively with what we know to be the highest elements of our own, his openness solely to our Reason, our Conscience, our earnest love of truth and right, is what I understand by the spirituality of God. It is a truth of the highest moment to our guidance in thought and action. It assures us that there are ways of life and forms of character from which the Divine Father is absolutely hidden, as the sun from midnight,—with the whole denseness of the earth between. Only by the attributes we share with him, the qualities of a common nature, can we apprehend him in the least. If he be a Spirit, we mistake him by our passions as completely as we miss him by our eye ; we lose him from our selfish heart as hopelessly as from our groping hand ; we are shut out from him in the insincerities and doublings of a worldly mind, as in the outer darkness of the grave : the drowsy thought, the unloving heart, the temper full of care, the decrepit will, the understanding scared from its clear simplicity, are buried from him as in death, deep as Tophet from the light. Even the mind of moral prudence, however correct, does but reach the confines of the horizon whence he is seen ; while an open reason and a guile-

less love, a courageous conscience and a patient trust, stand within the mount of vision, and, “being awake, behold his glory.” If he be a Spirit, then by acts of the spirit alone can he be approached and worshipped; by an earnest intentness of our highest faculties,—the truthful and living surrender of the soul. And wherever and however this offering is rendered, he is purely and acceptably served. Be it in speech or in silence, in the chancel or the street, in daily duty or in special rite, the conscious devotion of our best powers to his Divine appointments makes us his. Forms and times and words, postures and sacraments, stand in no relation to him, and as mere approaches to him are simply nought; and only as the natural language, and embodied shapes, of our own spirit, whose sacred affections would sometimes speak in symbol as well as act in reality, can they have place among the disciples of a prophet like our own.

The truth that “God is a Spirit,” thus understood, becomes one of the most comprehensive and fertile revelations of his nature. Everything is subordinated with him to spiritual ends. His power is at the disposal of his thought: his thought directed by his love: his love in harmony with his moral perfection. And while he rules all things with an equal hand, his impartiality consists, not in treating all creatures alike, whatever be their difference of rank; but in directing to each a discriminating regard, proportioned to its

nature, and suited to its place. And so, he arranges the atom, he shelters the bud, he guides the instinctive creature, he appeals to the free and self-conscious man : he pities the fallen, he helps the weak, he rebukes the faithless, quits the impenitent, loves the true and willing, and abides with the saint. Yet, with every variety of administration, all is embraced in one vast system of rule ; and though the links of being are few that visibly hang from heaven, there is not one dis-severed from the rest, or lost from the ascending juncture that reaches from nothingness to God. The very infant here on earth has its patron-angel in the heaven above. There is no room in this universe for the least contempt or pride ; but only for a gentle and a reverent heart ; seeing that all things have an upward look : if they be not great, they belong unto a greater, and sustain a less ; and read to every open mind a blessed lesson of holiness and trust.

Again, every Christian disciple must feel an assurance, quite characteristic of the source of his religion, of the *Holiness* of God. Accepting as the type of Him, within the limits of humanity, a sanctity like Christ’s, constant not of necessity but of choice, giving a law to others, yet serving one himself, we cannot but rely on his entire separation from moral evil, except to plead with its slaves, rebuke them, and recover them. The Father and Inspirer of that tempted and suffering Son of man was not, with all the infinitude of his

nature and the supremacy of his Rule, raised above the primitive and paramount distinctions of right and wrong, and placed in priority to the mysterious and immutable differences of good and ill; which are indeed potentially anterior to all things, and outlast them all. He did not create, but recognise them; and in that recognition did but unfold and express the inherent attributes and affections of his own nature. There are those who, in an overstrained and truly fatal attempt to glorify him as the cause of all, will tell you that he is the Absolute Source of the moral differences whose authority we feel; that, prior to his volition, there was no excellence in the true, the just, the merciful; no harm in the false, the unjust, the cruel; nor anything to choose between them; and that whatever, in the exercise of his autocratic monarchy, he resolved to order and forbid, thereby became the good and evil of the universe. Nothing, in this view, has an obligation in itself; everything is to be done because it is enjoined; and had the mandates from on high been precisely the reverse of what they are, and what are now the temptations of Hell had the upper hand of the laws of heaven, it would have been our duty to revere whatever we now abhor, and bow the knee to a Satanic God. If this be so, then the great Father himself finds nothing to approve and disapprove, but all things and thoughts are intrinsically indifferent to him: he follows no divine love, perceives no eternal



beauty, expresses no sense of perfection, in the activity of which the worlds of matter and the souls of men are born. Not Reason, not Affection, not Moral Sentiment, can be assigned as supplying the preconceptions which he put forth ; but irrational, unloving, objectless Self-will. And then, *having* determined a system to be so and not otherwise (which however would have been equally right, had it been otherwise and not so), what is called, by a shocking misnomer, his "*holiness*," consists in a mere persistency without swerving in that which has been adopted without reason. This, alas ! is what comes of overflying, with wings of vain philosophy, the blessed level of Christian simplicity and repose ; of quitting the green homesteads of a human and a heartfelt faith for the trackless air of speculation clear and cold, and amid the naked rocks and unmelting snows of the lonely intellect, losing sight of the slopes of Nazareth and the villages of Galilee. Surely nothing can well be conceived more at variance with the meek purity, the quiet trust, the reverent yet unfearing spirit of Christ, and with the secret faith which these imply, than this doctrine of Sovereign Will : as unlike the native truth, as the hard lines of thought, and stern gaze of temper on Calvin's face, to the clear deep eye, and look of loving sorrow in the upturned countenance of Christ. Listen to the tone of his most pathetic yet divinest hours. When he knelt within Gethsemane, did he bow before the Father,

as before One having the right of property in him, and lie still to be crushed by irresistible decree? When he said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it," did he mean only that there was no help for it, as Infinite Power was against him?—or, that the bitterness might be forgot, and the death embraced as life, when administered by One who pursued the purest and sublimest ends, and made the faithful perfect through suffering? Did Jesus learn anything to be right, by knowing it to be the Divine Will? or did he not rather know the Divine Will, by his consciousness of what was right? For my own part, I can form no intelligible conception of his inspiration, if not as the spontaneous and mystic uprising within him of thoughts of duty and affection, so self-evidencing, so incontrovertible, so divine, that they came *to* him as the whispered mind, and *from* him as the spoken oracle, of God.

For, after all the laboured attempts of theologians to make a spiritual revelation accessible by paths that are physical and external, there neither is, nor can be, any other index to the Will of God, than the handwriting of truth and conscience within us: we are to read this that we may interpret him, and have not to interpret him ere we can read this. All who presume to take the converse of this rule, and seek for something more rational than reason, more right than rectitude, more binding than duty, are sure to be betrayed into

questionable things, and to wander from the appointed ways of human life, by deserting their true and only guides, and seeking fanciful signs of Divine direction. Implicit trust in the moral intuitions in which the pure of heart for ever see their God, is the true discipleship, the genuine imitation of Christ, by which, with him, we adore and bless the providence of life as absolutely Holy. No faintest breath of moral evil ever stains the vision of the Father on which the Man of sorrows keeps his eye. In his discourses, in his struggles, in his prayers, there is no trace of God in the character of *Tempter*, as prompter of the evil heart, but only as the Inspirer of the good. And this is the more remarkable, because not only in the Hebrew Scriptures which disciplined the early mind of Christ, but in the narrative of his ministry by his own followers, in their comments on his history, in their missionary labours and public proclamation of his fate, we find this controlling agency of God, doing evil that good may come, openly appealed to and avowed. When Jesus “was despised and rejected of men,” so sad a lot was brought on him, as we are assured by John,\* “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of Esaias the prophet, ‘He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.’” The scene itself of Calvary, Peter, with more

\* John xii. 40.

of courtesy than severe fidelity, excuses to the perpetrators, with the plea, "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers ; but these things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." \* Imperfect as the separation is in the Gospels between the words of Jesus and those of his reporters, and doubtful as are many of the notices of him, it is, I believe, safe to affirm that this is a plea that never escapes his lips, but broadly discriminates the laxity of the disciples from the sanctity of the Master.

The holiness of God is still liable to be misapprehended, unless seen in the light of his spirituality. It is sometimes imagined that he is bound by it,—held by some fancied pledge,—to refuse forgiveness to even the truest repentance of the lapsed and delinquent will. But if he is a Spirit, then the evil which alienates from him resides not in the offender's *act*, which is momentary, but in his *spirit* which is continuous. Let that spirit be changed, and God will remember the act against him no more ; not being like a carping lawyer, but a living and a loving Mind. To the returning prodigal his arms are ever open, to welcome the dead to life again, and the lost one to his home. He will not indeed cut off the uncompleted part of the perpetrated act of guilt : it must take its unimpeded

\* Acts iii. 17, 18.

course, and bring on the penalties which are made its award in the order of nature and necessity. But the presence of this suffering is not the absence of forgiveness. At the very moment when the outward burthen of his past misdeeds is weighing upon the offender's life, and he is bearing about him a visible woe of sin, his present inward relation to God may be one of reconciliation and of peace.

Whatever else may be included in the truth that "God is a Spirit," this at least is implied : that he is free to modify his relations to all dependent minds in exact conformity with their changes of disposition and of need, and let the lights and shadows of his look move as swiftly as the undulating wills on which they fall. And how could this be, if, in spite of his contrition, the returning son were regarded as if still a prodigal? To conceive of God as having, by his own Law of Righteousness, deprived himself of all flexible and proportionate mercy, and become committed to some definite and relentless retribution, is to carry over into the supernatural realm a conception applicable no further than the natural. It is only in the outward system of the world that he has given notice, by invariable uniformity, that we must stereotype our expectations, and that he will deal with us as if he were under a bond of persistency. Only there, accordingly, it is that no release can be given till the full sentence upon our sin has been worked out, and

that it were vain,—nay unholy,—to seek escape. There, our present is made by the past, and we are treated for what we have been. But in the spiritual sphere we are regarded, not as we once were, but as we now are ; and it would be not less impossible for the All-seeing to turn in displeasure from any soul freshly surrendered to his will, than on the strength of former obedience and sweet psalms to look with complacency on the crimes of David in his fall. The holiness of God is indeed terrible to all who are inwardly unholy ; but not to those who have nothing which they would hide, if they could, from the Searcher of hearts. Who can fail to see this reflected in the life of Christ ? It was ever the *double mind*, of the dissembler, the self-deceiver, the hypocrite, from which he shrank with horror and indignation, and which lay bare before him through all its decent disguises ; whilst he was instantly drawn, with hopeful pity, if not with immediate joy, to all that was transparently true,—to the “ single eye ” that let the whole nature be full of light ; to the guileless child that could simply trust and look up ; to the contrite offender, that had thrown all self-excuse away, and had only tears for her past and prayers for her future.

It cannot surprise us that the impression of Christ's life and teachings advanced yet a little further, and culminated in the faith that “ God is Love ” ; for this is already implied in the essence of a nature spiritual

and holy. Of the Divine Spirit holiness is the rule, and of all spirit love is the power, without which there can be no movement forth upon objects and beings around, nothing to stir the self-centred repose, or in any way to turn pure being into the definite and successive action of a true life. Love is the universal and ever-varying impulse, carrying each mind towards the ends assigned it as possible ; while the law of holiness restrains from their indiscriminate pursuit, and selects and proportions their legitimate claims. As it is the characteristic of the spiritual nature to appreciate all things according to their worth, it will escape from the lower loves for objects that minister to self, and, as we see in Christ, be drawn at once, spirit to spirit, towards answering, yearning, and suffering souls. From the moment of his self-dedication, when he threw his cares away and went forth not having where to lay his head, the whole energy which others spend on interests of their own was poured into his humane and divine affections, and filled his life with an enthusiasm resistless and unique. However quiet his words, it is impossible not to feel the tender depths from which they come ; and even in his sternest rebukes there rings an undertone of pity for the helpless and deceived. Sympathy with men below, quickened by inward communion with the Supreme sympathy above, is the mastering inspiration of his life ; and in his selection of the most loving disciple to be the most beloved ; in his disappointment

32 *How sayest thou, 'Shew us the Father'?*

with the Temple and longing to deal with the uncovered sanctuary of the heart ; in his notice of the widow's charity, the mother's pressure for his blessing, the good youth's discontent with his own goodness ; in his contrast of the Pharisee's complacency with the Publican's beaten breast and downcast look of prayer ; in his tale of the "joy in heaven" ; in the restrained intensity of the parting meal, and the desolate hours which followed that pathetic converse ;—there is the expression of a soul self-surrendered in the pure sacrifice of love ; yet, in the sublime trust which surmounts and glorifies it all, is plainly to be seen to what a God he felt himself to be allied, and in what infinite depths of Divine love the affections and sorrows of human life are embraced and transfigured. His filial spirit of absolute devotion opened the beatific vision to him ; and in proportion as in this we have fellowship with him, will his Father be our Father, and his God our God.



### III.

## Temptations of Power.

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Mark i. 11-13.

“And there came a voice from Heaven, saying, ‘Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.”

THIS is a startling order of events. Satan so soon after God! the voice of heaven almost introducing the visits of hell! the very Spirit of Holiness driving the chosen soul into the wilderness of temptation! Where, it may be asked, is the privilege of inspiration, if it cannot even ward off the access of fiends? where the peace and blessing of Divine approval, if, while its accents yet ring upon the heart, the powers of darkness bring their awful challenge? Is there then no sanctity before which evil shrinks away, like spectres before the dawn? and around even the most beloved of God are the shadows still so deeply spread, that haunting forms of sin can lurk and choose their moment for surprise? It seems a natural demand of feeling, that he who is

consecrated to great ends, who is pronounced at one with God, should be spared the humiliating strife of lower minds, and lifted into a region of his own above obedience and beyond resistance.

This very feeling however is but a whisper from the same angel of unfaithfulness that hung upon the shadow of Jesus in the desert. It is the great illusion of our hearts to suppose a contrariety between the inspirations of heaven and the conditions of earth,—to expect from a holy call, not more awful conflicts, but only more splendid victories,—to think, when appointed to a sacred work, of the support God will give to us, rather than of the severities we must bear for him. That his grandest gift should bring, not special exemptions, but a more unsheltered exposure,—should plunge us deeper into temptation, and waste us with intenser sorrows, is so disappointing to the visions of natural romance, that only the fewest can believe it still. Yet to give us this truth, to wean us from the false tastes which deny it, to touch us with love enough for its free acceptance, was the highest end of Christ's revelation: it was for this that he united all opposites in himself, and reconciled them in a harmony incomprehensible before; whatever we most trust in God, and whatever we most pity in man; the most absolute sanctity and the bitterest trials; the sublimest destination yet the humblest lot; the nearest union with the holiness of heaven, yet no separation

from the constant shadow of possible sin. With him, as with us all, it was no doubt difficult, so long as he was amid the surroundings of common life, to believe in the stirrings of a divine call within him. The mystic promptings of the soul, the deep appealing look of men and things, the flash of inspired prayer into the mind, did not agree with the narrow home, the village cares, the synagogue routine: they would start away at the sound of the plane and saw; be drowned in the gossip of neighbours; and not dare to speak before the bearded Rabbi of the place. How should the youth suppose, even when the intimations were most full of wonder, that God had really sent for *him*? Long would he look for the heavenly light to shine on him through other souls, and turn with hopeful reverence to the wisdom he drew from the old and the enthusiasm he kindled in the young; not suspecting that the lustre was native to himself, and was but reflected in their face. When at length the ordinary lot could no longer quench the divine consciousness, when he had waited till the passionate haste of life was gone and he had found it clearer and deeper than before, when he had entered Jordan for the baptism of water and emerged to be invested with the baptism of fire;—driven to accept his loneliness with God, and to confess that neither the gentle home nor the stern prophet can help him to read the visions of his mind, he finds himself flung by reaction into a struggle

opposite in kind. Hitherto, he has clung to the quiet lot and shrunk in wonder before the awful inspiration : now, he is conquered by the inspiration and the lot appears suitable no more. He cannot return to it and yet believe the heavenly voices which the silence of the desert has made clear. They will grow confused again when the familiar sounds of Nazareth come back upon the sense ; and the face of Joseph and of Mary will make them seem unreal. How can he feel himself the trusted Child of the Most High, and yet go in and out at the old cottage door ? how venture on the language of authority in which his thoughts clothe themselves to his own mind, amid the dear scenes of early duty and obedience and beneath the astonished looks of nature and of men ? To live the divine life without any rescue from human conditions, to remain the peasant yet signify the holy God,—is it not a task which, even without unfaithfulness, humility and self-distrust themselves must spoil ? The moods of the purest and loftiest spirits are liable to cloud and change : there are none that can always and equally believe in their own best inspirations ; and when all seems against them and no response falls upon their loneliness, what is to uphold their faith ? If God would but irrevocably commit his servant, fling him publicly from the highest pinnacle of his convictions upon the outer pavement of his work, then perhaps, with the gate of retreat visibly closed against him, he

might hope to bear the strain, and hold himself in majesty above the misgivings of others or himself. This is the prayer which Jesus is tempted to breathe, ere he follows the spirit from the desert to the world : " Only pledge me, O Lord, before the face of men, and I shall be strong to do thy will : by the flash of thy power make it clear to even dull souls that I am thine, that I may hold to their thought in dark hours when I doubt my own : behold the pride of men and the greatness of this world ; send me not alone with bare feet and uncovered head to win thy kingdom there." Yet the prayer, ere he could think it through, he knew to be the Tempter's and not his own. It was an evil heart that stipulated for a sign ; that insisted on exemptions, and waited for a preconceived position : and it was at once the very problem and the only proof of the holy spirit, to decline no outward necessity and to glorify them all, to consecrate the accustomed ways of God, and find room within them for all that earth can hold of what is heavenly.

" Every disciple shall be as his master." The temptation of Jesus is repeated wherever there is any gift of faculty, any mission and opportunity of work. Few are there, who can take their post and fling themselves into their appointed ends, without complaining of the conditions by which their hands are tied, and craving for immunities to lift them over an obstacle and facilitate their achievement. When, however,

men of the usual dimensions of character, men devoted only to small and private schemes, throw the blame of their shortcomings upon their circumstances, and pretend that they cannot manage the problem of life upon God's terms, we feel at once the absurdity and insolence of their delusion ; we ask, ' Who is this, that must have the eternal laws removed out of his way ? and what fine thing is he about, that for its sake the everlasting eyes of truth and justice are to wink ? ' And when we find that he has only to sell his sugars or to freight his ships, we are indignant that for such ends he should demand exceptions from the rule of simplicity which God governs a universe without needing to violate. But when vast interests appear at stake, and great purposes have been embraced ; when the liberation of a people, or the propagation of a healing faith, engage the patriot or the prophet ; when interest and imposture are garrisoning the world by mere force of unscrupulousness, and marching over it with the sword of oppression and the crozier of falsehood ; and when perhaps deliverance might be won by a word of deceit or a deed of treachery ; who then can be found to preach a holy abstinence ? who will not exclaim, ' Tell the lie and save the world ' ? And when the redeemers of mankind reply, " Not till God's time, which the index of Satan never shows, and only in God's way, which takes no windings of guilt ; " there is seldom wanting some Judas Iscariot to bring the

crisis on, to move the clock hands and make the hour ring out, and force the Kingdom of Heaven to assert itself by a trifling sacrifice to Hell. And this it is that brings on the agony for so many leaders of higher faith, and lays the cross on so many a righteous cause, and seals it in the sepulchre, till God gives it a better resurrection, and it preaches to men's hearts from heaven, immortal, because unstained, and inspiring, because divine.

There is a sphere in the life of every one, except the child, in which he is appointed to *rule*, and to exercise some functions by the methods of his own will. From the monitor in a school to the minister of an empire, there are gradations of authority that leave no one without a place. Would you know the real worth of any soul, be it another's or your own, *that* is the sphere on which you must fix your eye.\* It is little that a man goes right under orders and when he is obliged to serve: you may always make a good soldier by sufficient drill; and amid the pressure of custom and beneath the light of the public gaze, even a passive and pliant conscience may be shaped into good looks, and wear a gloss. But how is it with you in your place of power,—among the servants whom you govern, the children whom you train, the companions who place you at their head? Do you take liberties there, as if there were

\* One of the seven sages of Greece is quoted by Aristotle as saying, that "it is his *place of rule* that shows a man." ὅρι ἀρχῇ ἀνδρα δείξει.  
—Bias ap. Arist. Nicom. Eth. V. i. 16.

nothing to restrain, and fling about your self-will, as if it were free of all the field? Do you profane the law of duty by making it a homage to yourself, instead of letting its authority pass through you, as yourself chief captive of the will of God? Do you grant exemptions to yourself, exemptions of sloth, exemptions of temper, exemptions of truth, as if it were given you to loose as well as bind? There is no surer mark of a low and unregenerate nature than this tendency of power to loudness and wantonness instead of quietude and reverence. To souls baptized in Christian nobleness the largest sphere of command is but a wider empire of obedience, calling them, not into escape from holy rule, but to its full impersonation. Only now that no outer rule is given them by another, and they have nothing to copy with painful imitation, have they to bring forth the interpretation from within, and set themselves at one with the will of God by a heart of self-renunciation,—a love that seizes all divine ends, and in expressing itself realizes them. In short, power is never felt *as power*, except by those who abuse it. Like other things that awaken desire at a distance, no sooner is it entered, than it is found to be not more triumphant happiness, but deeper life; utterly disappointing to him who wants more for himself; ennobling to him who can dispense and administer for God.

In no sphere perhaps is the chance of failure more impatiently borne, and therefore the temptation to the



use of forbidden resources more vehement, than in the exercise of *Political power*. No plea can be urged to justify in the Statesman more than in private persons, the practice of dissimulation, intrigue, and guilty compromise with wrong. God has not made one law for the lofty and another for the low ; or presented his holiness in Christ to sanctify our private homes in Bethany, to overawe the menials of our Jerusalem, and be spat upon and buffeted by our captains of power and high-priests of judgment. Yet the impression extensively prevails, that into public life we are not to carry the rigour of the domestic code and the purity of the Christian standard ; that arts must be admitted and passions indulged in the game of parties and of states, which you would condemn in your neighbour and despise in yourself ; that hollow profession in a political orator is not hypocrisy ; that eaves-dropping and seal-breaking is not meanness ; that to connive at the knavery of a friend and inflame the sensitive wound of an enemy is something else than fraud and malignity ; and that he who can longest exclude a competitor at home or best hoodwink rival diplomatists abroad, most deftly accomplishes the legitimate functions of government. The highest heroism expected from the statesman and sometimes unblushingly paraded by himself is, that he will forego a present popularity in pursuit of a remoter Fame ; a declaration, you may observe, that always surprises the well-dressed multitude into rapturous shouts,

as if the sentiment had the fresh flavour of Christian nobleness, instead of smelling of the sick-room of dying heathenism : or, if there are some who deride its emptiness, and look on such aerial ambition as a precarious flight in a balloon, it is not because they rise above the average atmospheric currents, but because they stay below them ; not that their faithful soul is already lifted to heaven, but that their prudent foot is clinging to the ground. To them, praise seems empty in comparison, not with the reality of justice, but with the solidity of profit ; and short-lived beside, not the eternity of right, but the security of sound finance, and the durability of land. Amid this universal laxity of sentiment respecting public morals, it is hardly surprising that few statesmen hesitate to accept the lowered standard, and give up the attempt to harmonize their public action and their private mind. Assured on all hands that the work before them is a sort of devil's art, boasting indeed a divine appointment, but manageable only by *undivine* instrumentality, they cease to believe the purer inspirations of their souls : they are dazzled with the view over the wide kingdoms of time and history, which the Tempter shows them from their mountain height : they waver and wonder ; fluctuate between the sanctities within and the glories without ; but in the end do *not* say, " It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Less conspicuous and intense, but not less real, are the temptations attaching to *Social* power,—to rank so high as to invite perpetual manifestations of deference, and ward off many a reminder of obligation. The danger is the more insidious, because here it takes the form, not of an active assault, but of a passive ease in lower living, an insensible subsidence of character to a level that spares all effort. The human conscience can ill bear to stand alone, and draw all its incentives from communion with itself and with God: it needs the answering or warning glance of other minds: it is quickened by sympathy; it is nerved by resistance; and he who is so lifted into a solitary position, as to have few equals and no apparent enemies, misses much of the invigorating discipline of life, and is perilously thrown on his own spontaneous faithfulness. The Statesman, who lives in the public gaze, and is watched by keen critics of his career, is at least rescued from self-deception, and can always hear the worst of himself from one half of the world around him. The great Ecclesiastic, if misled into blind arrogance by the conventional reverence which surrounds him, seldom escapes a rude awakening from the sarcasms of a rival or the polemic of a heretic, and has the opportunity of seeing himself with the eyes of the profane. The Dictator in the commonwealth of letters struggles to his seat through a shower of jealous missiles, and reaches it pierced with many a self-revealing wound.

To no one of these, it would seem, is the unsuspecting dream of self-idolatry possible. But, for the Prince or the local magnate of private life,—if he wake not of himself, what great bell is there to startle him, what shock to bring him to his feet? If he be a fool, no wise man will let him know it; if an idler, the strenuous who do his work will not reproach him; if insolent, the victims of his humour will give him no reply. Thus fenced round from the reaction of human sentiment, what wonder if he feels as though exempt from the claims of earnest life and the scrutiny of eternal Righteousness? Will you venture to say that, if you had to dispense with the outward checks which sustain the vigilance of your conscience, if you were screened from averted looks and altered tones and all the slowly gathering shadows of unfaithfulness, you would still maintain the standard high as ever, and, without human mediation, feel the pure eyes of Infinitude upon you? Possibly, you might with good reason place this trust in yourself, were you called to some field of action, which put such strain upon you as to throw your best powers to the front. But would you be equally secure, were the demand upon you, as it is upon the heirs of social eminence, not so much to *act*, as to *be*; not to pledge great faculties to a great scale of work; but, in daily details that, one by one, seem to have no ideal in them, to keep the domestic and social precincts pure, and to unravel the dazzling complexities of elevated life

with the clear hand of a reverent simplicity? Few severer tests than this are applied to the inward energy of the spirit; and the beguiling Satan that secretes himself in such a lot is harder to drive out than the fiends of terror that come to us brandishing the rack and torch of martyrdom. It is doubtless a sublime courage which rises up with concentrated force and rushes upon death rather than take the liar's and the traitor's safety; but I know not whether, in the Heart-searcher's measures, there would be a less fidelity in the stainless and strenuous administration of the lot at once most envied and most steeped in temptation; in the refusal of ease, the command of passion, the continuance of modest sincerity, the devotion to duty, the hidden truth of affection to man and God, which have sometimes kept the summits of society pure and bright.

Intellectual power, no less than external, is solicited by the same order of temptation, fostered likewise by the indulgent admiration of mankind. Genius is its own eulogist, and is accustomed to say fine things of itself, and by the charm of its song to get them believed and written on the very thoughts of men. The homage of Milton to Dante, of Wordsworth to Milton, of Coleridge to both, forms so august a *catena* of praise, falling on the ear with such peals of "linked sweetness," that it is no wonder if young souls take it as paid to demigods whom they must simply worship.

It becomes a favourite maxim, that Genius is its own law; and is appointed to legislate for others rather than to be under rule itself. The maxim is the more seductive, because there is an important sense in which it is really true. In relation to its own special subject,—be it science or be it song,—it is the attribute and necessity of genius to burst the limits of earlier models, and create a type of new excellence to which the canons of established criticism do not apply. When a Shakspeare has lived, the drama can no longer be judged by the example of Sophocles and the rules of Aristotle: to try the natural history of an Owen and a Darwin by the measures of Linnæus,—or the music of Beethoven and Mendelssohn by the practice of Handel,—would be a mere tenacious pedantry. It is from the productions of higher minds that we rise to higher rules, and leave the former bounds behind. Nor is our moral and spiritual life any exception to this principle. If ever we seize a purer ideal, or are lifted into sublimer worship, it is because some soul of deeper insight and holier aspiration has shown us the way, has changed our vision, and opened to us a better than our best. But this is no escape into *lawlessness*; it is an emergence from *lower* in order to serve a *higher* law; a law, not arbitrarily made by the self-will of genius, but actually *found* and reverently followed, in the reality of things. Every great mind, in the province of its greatness, obediently serves a

divine order or beauty above it, and only by serving, conquers and rules. All honour to these legislators of our humanity, in the several fields of their supremacy! But turn them not from a blessing into a curse by extending your homage to their incapacities and your indulgence to their sins. That Bacon laid out the ground of all our Science makes no better of his meanness; that Newton worked out the lunar theory does not improve his peevishness; that Byron wrote in strains of melody and pathos makes sadder than before his want of purity and reverence of mind. Such infirmity belongs, not to their insight, but to their blindness; and wherever its shadow spreads, the universe is darker for it. Precisely in proportion as they yield to it, is the range of their genius lowered, or its stroke enfeebled, or its vision dimmed. No man, however gifted, can set up for himself and claim to be a "chartered libertine" in this world; unless he is to present the most humiliating of human contradictions,—the divine seer in one field, groping and stumbling as the blind in another. Every gift that declines to *serve*, and is too high to retire and pray; that craves for itself some *show-miracle*, and requires to *seem* as well as *be*; that would be flung from some conspicuous pinnacle that it may light upon its feet on the crowded pavement of mankind; that cannot abstain from forbidden use of its power, and remain latent, if need be, under depression, provocation, and martyrdom;—is no inspiration of God, but

has lent itself to some Satan promising it "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." Within his special range, we may freely own the title of the man of genius to be a law to himself and us, seeing that *there* our admitted rules are not large enough to cover the whole compass and achievements of his faculty. But this, far from being a negation of law or a personal immunity from it, simply identifies him with its higher revelation, and only says that he will be judged by a standard severer and sublimer than our own ; that he has the glorious bondage laid upon him of a perfection beyond the limits of others' vision. It means, not that he may set the heel of contempt on the sanctity of known right, but that with the feet of a winged ascension he is to bear it into loftier altitudes, whence it will command a wider horizon and more effectually see that all is harmonious and good.

Faculty then, in all its varieties, comes to us as a fiduciary deposit, opening, no doubt, new provinces to the will, but concurrently enlarging the scope of duty. That "of him to whom much is committed much will be required" is the rule of heaven : that he may do as he likes, since power exempts from obligation, is justly represented as the rule of hell. Whoever follows it exiles himself from the sacred territory of the world, and goes over, with his proud gifts, to the outer darkness. For in this ordered universe there is no exception, even at the supreme height, to the acknowledgment of law, no breaking of bounds into



wild uncertainty. The Lord of all, the very God of our worship, is not raised by his almightiness above the range of inviolate order. With a boundless freedom of possibility, he yet commits his energy to unswerving lines, and keeps the track with an eternal patience. Are our problems so complicated, our prerogatives so lordly, that we must take liberties with the law of which he is the everlasting Keeper? What household sway so vast and various as his, who claims the Fatherhood of all? What administration so far-reaching, what empire so stately as his, who presides over the universe and is charged with all the worlds? What intellectual realm so absolute as his, who in himself is the truth of all thought, the meaning of all beauty, the essence of all good, and for us is the fountain of genius and inspirer of conscience? Yet he works out his wondrous designs in the orbits of a perfect faithfulness: he identifies his will with the inherent supremacy of Righteousness; and the freedom of his infinitude he quits at countless centres for the relative life of love and holiness. To him let us but cleave in all our strife; and the Tempter will flee; the wilderness will be desolate no more; angels will come and minister unto us: and when we pass thence to the ministry of life, be it to the glory of a transfiguration, the sorrows of a Gethsemane, or the sacrifice of the cross, the tranquillizing peace of God will never be far from us.

#### IV.

### The limits of Divine and Human Forgiveness.

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MATTHEW vi. 11.

“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

STRANGELY enough, this prayer is daily uttered by those who deny that God can forgive us as we forgive one another; and who say that he requires a penal satisfaction which we never dream of making a condition of our forbearing mercy. The words have no meaning, if the Divine clemency and the human be not the same attribute, correspondingly exercised under corresponding conditions; not free and facile in the lower nature, and bound under difficulties in the higher. The parallel movement of God's absolving Pity and our own would be no object of prayer,—would be wrong or impossible,—were not the moral essence and elements of both minds and of all minds the same. Pardon above answers, it appears, to pardon below. And if pardon be thus homogeneous in the two spheres, then penalty; if penalty, then sin; if sin, then goodness. All the lights and shades of the finite conscience

are but reflections of the infinite holiness; and the pure and good and true on earth is pure and good and true in heaven. There is *one righteousness*, ever consistent with itself, for the whole universe; vindicating the same law, present with the same sanctity, wherever there is a Will free to obey,—on the theatre of angels and in the nursery of the child,—in the secret self-denials of private life, and in the open redemption of the world. This unity of God's moral government, which includes all souls in one undivided realm, and gives them free passports through all time and place, is the key and safeguard of the genuine gospel. Did men hold fast by this essential truth, they could never feign for God a character they would repudiate for themselves; or suppose a heavenly economy unlike every type of beauty and rectitude revered in their human world; or feel it allowable, in rising to the supernatural, to emerge into the unnatural, and confound the monstrous with the Divine. This truth will perhaps keep us from going wrong, when we endeavour to determine the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. For, if the Lord's Prayer itself links together human and Divine forgiveness, and presents them as of the same type, we have only to consult the witness of our own conscience in order to interpret the Eternal Mercy.

Imperfectly as the Christian ideal has approached to realization, *the forgiving temper* has won an established

place among the objects of our moral admiration. Contradicted though it be by the "Laws of honour," and violated by the thousand jealousies and slanders of private life, it yet commands, when it appears in modern times, a respect quite foreign to the sentiments of the ancient world. To forego resentment is felt to be nobler than to indulge it, provided your forbearance really arises from your being not beneath insult but above it; not from indifference and pusillanimity, but from repose on the inner force of right, and faith in the returning balance of conscience when undisturbed by human anger and left alone with God. Perhaps, however, this just estimate would win a more triumphant way, if it were relieved of certain false claims upon it which continually drive it to recoil; and were set clear, with its own responsibilities, of all corrupting caricatures that assume its guise.

Observe then the *class of evil doings* which are described as the proper objects of our forgiveness. They are "*trespasses against us*;" wrongs which we have ourselves sustained. In these cases, it is felt, the mere law of nature gives us advantage over the offender, which we may press upon him without injustice if we choose. As victims of his injury, we acquire certain rights over him, which he cannot complain if we employ. If we insist on an apology, if we look for reparation, if we demand his punishment, we shall not transgress the limits of equity, and shall be sup-

ported by the social feeling embodied in Law. The incidence of the hurt upon our particular personality invests that personality with exceptional powers, different from those which the general mass of bystanders possess. These powers are at our free disposal; we may advance them; we may withdraw them; and in either case stand exempt from reproach of men. And between the two extremes, there may be many discretionary shades exhibiting the play of human dispositions, from the hard terms of the Shylock temper to the free dismissal, "Go, and sin no more." The whole of this range of discretion the Christian law sweeps entirely away; requiring us to forego unreservedly the personal ascendancy of the injured over the injurer,—to disengage our individual claims from the moral problem,—and to ask no homage of atonement to our hurt selves. We are to descend from the eminence of advantage on which a sufferer of wrong is set, and stand upon the impersonal level of the universal conscience of God and all good men. This entire surrender of all rights of resentment is certainly within the competence and the obligation of Christian forgiveness; and if we be not ready to wipe out gratuitously the memory of stinging words, to remit a debt too hard to pay, and still to re-embrace the repentant brother after offences against us seventy times seven,—we are yet among the unchastened disciples who "know not what spirit they are of."

But suppose this act of Christian amnesty complete,—suppose that you have signed away, by a generous stroke of release, every shred of sore demand; are we to conclude that everything is reinstated as before,—the evil flung back into nothingness,—and our own affection bound to resume where it left off before it broke? Alas! human guilt and grief are not cleared out upon such easy terms, any more than you can purify the plague by a bill of indemnity. The universe has no cemetery where you can bury dead sins out of the way, and by giving them no monument let the earth be green above them as before. Men indeed in their egotism are apt to imagine, when they are injured, that the *personal affront to them* constitutes the whole wrong; that it is therefore their own to deal with it as they may; and that if they choose to say it shall be cancelled, it is thereby gone. They expect that an *injury forgiven* shall be treated as a *sin erased*; that the offender shall come back upon the old terms, and find the seats of trust and affection which he had left void swept and garnished for his return. And for themselves, they often act upon this principle of free release; especially in matters of debt and justice, regarding the insolvent's certificate as if it were a moral clearance; and when the fraudulent name reappears upon the office-door, treating it as if written again in the book of life. It is the characteristic demoralization of modern times, to believe in nothing

but morality, and so to cease to believe in it, to regard all veracity and integrity as a mere affair between man and man, to which society binds and from which society may loose; and so to feel that if the sinned against and the sinning can but come to terms, the guilty storm is all blown over, and no awful shadow remains behind. The "City" laughs at the old chivalrous sentiment that honour is not human but divine,—that plighted faith is a thing recorded not on scrivener's parchment but among eternal words. Yet in proportion as we recede from that true doctrine, it will terribly avenge the denial; and rotting securities and multiplied ruin will teach us that, when the meaning is gone of swearing on the gospel, it is but slippery footing that we have upon the law.

That in all wrong there is an element which it is not ours to forgive, is evident the moment you turn your eye upon trespasses *against others*. If a miscreant strikes a mother,—a wife,—an innocent child, how are you to be affected towards his offence? Will you offer him your compassionate pardon? If it were not an affectation, it would be an impertinence. Nay, it would make you an accomplice; for the only rights of *yours* which he has invaded are the rights of the common conscience and affections which he has outraged, and you cannot surrender these on his behalf and release him from their hostility, without taking sides with his wickedness against that sense of Right, which is the

public prosecutor in the service of the King of kings. Can you sincerely reproach yourself for the indignation that boils up within you as you witness his enormity? Is there nothing righteous in the anger? more righteous than any placid prayer for his forgiveness? Surely it is a displeasure which you are not entitled to lay down, against a guilt removed beyond your clemency. Here, then, you stand face to face with wrong-doing which vehemently moves you, and to which your Christian forgiveness has no application. Nor is it merely that your individual rights have not been the objects of attack; the duty of forgiveness rests elsewhere. Let the duty be ever so perfectly discharged by the person injured, it remains impossible,—nay, becomes more impossible, for you; the meeker the sufferer, the less reconciled must the heart of the spectator be. The feeling remains behind that in such sins there is that which, exposed to all our sunshine, *will* not bleach; that, when human mercy has spent its all and resigned every disposable right, there is an irremovable residue of guilt, which neither in heaven nor on earth can be treated as though it were not.

That moral right and wrong are more than mere relations between persons, and are so far beyond the reach of personal forgiveness, is still more evident from the case in which a man is an *offender against himself*, by the indulgence of evil propensities not aggressive upon others. The injurer and the injured are here the



same ; and if the guilt consisted in the personal *wrong*, and from all wrong the sufferer of it could absolve, this delinquent should be able to *forgive himself*, and blot out his own transgression ; and we should be bound to accept his self-reconciliation, and not bar his exit with acquittal from the court of conscience. If he could contrive to make matters up with himself, we should have no voice in the case, and be obliged to let him pass as innocent. Are these conditions realised ? On the contrary, no man is able to forgive himself ; and the more nearly he benumbs himself into the likeness of such a state, the less we are able to absolve him in our hearts. If anything can crush out from us the last sparks of hope and sympathy,—if anything can substitute unmitigated loathing for that moral anger which, as a burst of surprise, is a claim of brotherhood and a confession of disappointed trust,—it is the self-content of the guilty,—his cheerful domestication with his own uncleanness,—his willingness to pocket his own affronts and levy no damages, and slur over his unchastened ways as his prerogative of imprudence. But it is only in the case-hardened nature that this can be. The offender not yet shut up in his opacity well knows that it were a vain mockery to reprieve or forgive himself ; that his most private account is still not his alone ; that in his utmost solitude and between stone walls voices come out of the dark substance of things to claim him ; that wipe as he may the film of shame

from the window of his breast, it steals back again upon the cold surface, and betrays the ill accord between his atmosphere and heaven's. This awful sense may doubtless lie torpid and breathe heavily in this life, as if under the magic chloroform of sin. But it is ever there, if not as an immediate reality, at least as the next possibility,—as an anguish *due* to what is going on, whether it can cry out or not; and a mere breath of circumstance,—a passing wind of guilty memory across the brow,—the glance of a pure deep eye,—a flash of instant calamity,—the roll of coming thunder,—may wake it up, and show the features stripped of their placid mask, and convulsed under Rembrandt-lights of judgment. Men may persuade us that our crime is *only* crime, from which they can absolve us. We may persuade ourselves that a vice is *only* vice, from which, as chief sufferers, we may absolve ourselves. But “the wicked fleeth, when no man pursueth”; and in some hour, as our path skirts the desert, Remorse, as the voice of One crying in the wilderness, tells us that both are also *sins*, of which there is Another to take account; and even now his way is made ready,—the cloud of his approach is there upon the sands, and there is scarce an hour to repent.

We have thus traced the offender's guilt through all its human haunts; and whether directed against us, or against others, or against himself, it has always an element in it unaccounted for by personal relations, and

therefore removed beyond the range of our forgiveness. What is this mysterious residue? Shall we seize it now at last, that we have chased it off the earth, and pushed it to the final resort of personal existence, by calling it an offence against God? The pardon which it is not ours to give,—does it rest with him? May we say that all moral evil being a violation of his law and a repugnance to his nature, Mercy can pass no verdict, till his absolving voice has spoken; but that if He also concurs, then at last the sin is really blotted out, and we are rid of all its curse? Is it in even his infinite prerogative freely and unconditionally to forgive,—to cancel the past, and look upon the sinner as if he were the saint? No! there is still an element in evil which no will, though it be almighty, can destroy;—a kernel of adamant which not the weight of the universe can crush. No one can carry his clemency into that over which he has no right, and which he cannot alter by the arbitrary disposals of his will. That which he makes, he can unmake; the rule he has invented he may forego: but that which is universal and uncreate, the element of all Minds, Divine as well as human, is placed beyond all discretionary power, and keeps its own quality against the most sovereign decrees. If Sin is nothing more than a *personal affront* to God, then doubtless it is open to his free forgiveness; receding from his rights, and in his tender mercy merging all ill-will, he may fling back the door, and the

prisoner is at large. But who can accept this account of moral evil? Is not sin committed by men who have no idea of his person, and no purpose of affront? and how then can its essence in heaven be something quite foreign to its spirit on earth? And what can be more derogatory to the Holiest of all,—what more utterly subversive of all moral reverence for him, than not only to consider him susceptible of personal affront, but to assume that only in this way does he care for guilt at all? No! he does not love the right and good because it is the thing which he has ordered; he orders and loves it because it is the right and good; and he can no more see or make it otherwise by a fiat of his will, than he can compel by a word the circle to be square, or identify the crooked and the straight. He is himself the All-Holy; not the author, but the spontaneous impersonation of the eternally true, and just, and good, conforming to the moral order, coalescing with the moral beauty, and adopting the moral Law, which he reveals in our conscience and proclaims in his universe. Righteousness is not the product of his Will, but the expression of his nature; and behind the free creations of his discretionary power there lies an eternal ground of rectitude, which it is his Holiness to assume. Hence even to his forgiveness there is a limit beyond which possibility itself cannot go. The personal element indeed,—viz. of hurt and alienated affection,—*that* his tender mercy can remove and unconditionally cancel.

But the intrinsic evil of a corrupted mind, and the external curse which it entails,—these are beyond the touch of annihilation; and this burthen, weighing down the penitent, and retarding the saint, we must for ever bear.

What then do we mean, when we pray for forgiveness? Do we ask for an escape from the proper penalties of sin? Having sown the mortal poison, do we hope to gather the immortal fruit? Is this the meaning of the cry of Christendom for “Salvation”? No! for this would be only the shriek of terrified selfishness; and would be no expression of the true sorrow for sin. The first prayer of the genuine penitent is, not for deliverance from his load, but for strength to bear it all: his first fear is lest it should be too light or slip away, and leave the balances of righteousness unadjusted and in disorder: and did the mercy of others shield and spare him, all the more would he seek the expiation of sorrow and denial within himself. If my unfaithfulness has removed me further from the infinitely Good, I will not ask to have the toilsome space which I have lost abolished for my ease. If my low desires have spread a cloud before me, till I have not purity of heart to see him, I will not pray to have the air miraculously cleared, or refuse to wait till the inner blindness yields, and the beauty of holiness can come into vision once more. If, in my perverseness, I have brought on me any sentence of pain, of

exile, of disgrace, I will not haste from it, but bare my back to the lash of all the anguish. Only, let not that distance be His estrangement; that dread darkness, the withdrawal of his insulted spirit. One thing alone my heart requires,—one gleam of living light amid the ashes and the gloom; that, while my penance is worked out, the face of God should not be turned away; that into my cell of humiliation the flood of divine pity should break, and keep aglow the openings of eternal hope, and sustain the hidden strength of an everlasting love. This it is for which the Christian prays; for the unbroken repose, the trustful communion, of personal affection, giving a tender patience to the anguish of expiation; not indeed sweeping the storms away, but penetrating the overcast skies with light and glory. And he is answered by a peace of heart which, even in moments of contrition, opens to him the mystery of reconciliation.

## V.

### Self-surrender to God.



ROMANS vi. 13.

“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.”

IN a certain sense it is the tendency of advancing knowledge to place God in our thought at a greater distance from the realities of life, and to render impossible that simple faith in his occasional intervention on the scene, which belongs to an early stage of human culture. The times, the places, the histories in which we had imagined his special presence and distinctive agency, become more and more difficult to keep apart as sacred islands in the sea of wonder: they disclose, on nearer search, manifold relations, in their structure and products, to the main continent of time and place and history from which they had long lain quite detached in our belief; and if, in order to the clear perception of God's activity, it be necessary to reserve for him some exceptional sphere, where sudden starts of power take place of quiet evolution, or law and order have not yet commenced, he must then undoubtedly recede from

us as our minds advance, and hide himself in the outer darkness that environs all our knowledge. "The third heaven" into which Paul was "caught up" we too have visited, and found to be a region of space and stars. At the mouth of many a great river there is a geologic sand-glass by which we count back some twenty times past the interval at which we had supposed the creation week to stand. And the more we lay our minds open to the broad history of mankind, the migration of their tribes, the affinities of their languages, the development of their religions, the less can we distinguish any lonely path of divine march through the complicated throng, and find children of God only in one clan and his prophets only in one tongue. The realm of Law, it cannot be doubted, spreads and will ever spread, as our apprehension enlarges. Knowledge, in its very essence, is a growing perception of kinship and unity in things: it brings the scattered groups of fact into the parts of a higher organism; and in proportion as we insist on identifying the divine with the exceptional, obliges us to go out wider and more into the dark to find it. Those (and they are many) with whom the spread of light and order and beauty and life through the whole web of things is equivalent to the banishment of God, must assuredly feel as if the tent of Abraham at whose door He stood had expanded to the radius of the starry sphere, and left him still outside.

Yet is there an inverse tendency of our nature which



counteracts this estrangement from the Living God, and disappoints the predictions of those who say that he is but a morning visitant of our humanity and will never abide with us till even. Religion, with the progress of moral experience and intellectual gifts, assumes more and more *inwardness* and spirituality; and *this*, not as a mere escape from the outer world which science disenchant, but by an involuntary change of taste and feeling inseparable from all higher culture, and affecting poetry, philosophy, morals, not less than religion. *All* our life as it reaches its higher stages,—as it speaks a more refined language and exchanges richer thought,—necessarily becomes more *reflective*, communes more with itself, and takes the external Universe more into the colours of the atmosphere within. God, in short, who is ever at the summit of our thought, occupies at all times whatever sphere seems at the moment to be highest; and as the education of men begins with the senses and ends with the conscience and affections, it is certain that divine intimations must first be seen and heard without, and only at last be felt and read within. Accordingly, it is acknowledged by every one that a ritual worship, addressing itself chiefly to the senses, is naturally prior to a faith that appeals to the will by hope and fear; as this again gives way to the pure piety of love and trust. So far is this from being a mere imaginary progress, that its stages are broadly marked on the history of the

world. Every religion seeks for something that may be *offered to God* and be acceptable to him, and may set the worshippers at one with him ; and according as our offering is more or less an external thing do we find our place in one of three great classes that divide mankind. To give him something that we *have* is *Heathen* ; to offer him what we *do*, is *Jewish* ; to surrender to him what we *are*, is *Christian*. ‘ Take my goods and cease to be angry with my sin,’ was the cry of the first ; ‘ Accept my righteousness, and remember thy promise, for I have served thee,’ speaks the character of the second ; ‘ I am not my own, but thine, O Lord ; live thou in me, or else I die,’ is the prayer of the third. To buy off displeasure by sacrifice ; to deserve favour by obedience ; to attain similitude and communion by loving self-abandonment ; are the three aims that make the ascending scale of faith. As we pass up from step to step, God draws nearer and nearer to close relation with us ; first, asking for some of our *possessions*, and leaving us still owners of the rest ; next, imposing his Law upon our *will*, and appearing within us as a *restraint* and negation on something which else would be ; finally, coalescing with our highest nature to subdue and mould it all into sympathy with his own perfectness. And so does heaven come nearer to us in one direction at the very time that it goes further from us in another. While our early mode of thought follows his retiring shadow out into the night that em-

braces nature, his warm light is stealing inwards on us by the lines of an inverse pulsation ; and whilst we are looking for him afar, in sadness at the cold distance, his living beams close in upon the heart and claim us for his own.

The sentiment of utter self-surrender to God is not only distinctively Christian, but is everywhere, in the writings of St. Paul, fixed, as to its very focus, on the central act of Christ's existence,—his death upon the cross. That act, regarded as the free acceptance of a lot possible but not holy to escape, as the giving of himself away, as the yielding of the divinest humanity to the deepest humiliation, is held up by the Apostle as the very type and image of the Christian mind, and as spreading the blessed contagion of self-sacrifice through the disciples' band ; who are to feel at one with him in his choice of the anguish and his rising into life ; for whom all other and more shrinking course is not less closed than if they had hung with him on the cross, and whispered in his words "It is finished," and left all mortal lingerings like the grave-clothes in his tomb, and with him ascended into the unreluctant affections of a saintlier world. Do they call themselves by *his* name,—the Crucified ? Then the plunge is taken, and self is gone ! As the water of baptism closed over them, in that moment their past was sunk to rise no more ; and the figure that then emerged was a new creation, the personal form alone the same, but

now possessed and moved by the heavenly Christ that liveth in its life. No language is too intense for the Apostle to express his sense of the absolute identity between discipleship and self-abnegation. It is not that as an ethical rule *they are to crucify* every resisting desire ; they *have done* it ; the act of “ putting on Christ ” includes it all ; and it is as much too late to recall the sacrifice as for the dead to retrace their steps. No ! in that one death all have died to the lower nature ; and in that single rising into a diviner sphere, all are risen into a higher air, and live no longer to themselves. They will therefore “ yield themselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead.”

Does any one repel this language of the Apostle as an enthusiasm, and doubt whether it corresponds with any moral reality in human life ? Are the questions raised, whether there is such a temper as this surrender of what we are to God ? where he may be that we should yield to him ? where is the self that we should resign ? I freely own the difficulty of answering such questions in a way that can satisfy the state of mind from which they spring ; for they ask you to exhibit in analysis a form of character that lives only as a whole ; to find the bones and joints of an organism which by this very act parts with the thrilling features and the deep and tender eye, to become a rigid skeleton ! Religion is not the matter of life that you can spread it out and show it, but the spirit of life that makes it

different from mechanism and death : it is not the poem's rhyme and stanzas that you may count and scan, but the soul of beauty that makes it music, and the pulse of thought that makes it throb. It can be understood only by sympathy from the heart outwards, not by induction from the appearances inwards. Though the most powerful commander of action, and the most productive agency in history, it is not defined by what it does : it is a mood, an attitude of soul towards God that alters the whole aspect of the universe, and affixes quite different and deeper meanings to all its symbols. It is a presence at the very springs of thought, sending them down limpid and sparkling with a vital air, that nurtures the roots of things wherever the current flows, and enriches life with deeper forests and with greener fields.

But surely it is not fanciful to say that God asks for our surrender, when he shows us a higher than we are inclined to do, and calls us by a secret yearning to be what we have not yet become. Whence but from him the vision that ever haunts us of a purer and more perfect order in our daily life,—an order less indulgent to our ease, more faithfully accounting for our time, more fresh from our affections ? Who is it that smites us to the heart when the petulant word has escaped the lips, or the shameful indulgence degraded our will, or fear and distrust spilt our resolve as water on the ground ? What eye is it that looks in upon our infatua-

tion, when, after being brought trembling to the very verge of true repentance, we rush in our pride into self-excuse instead, and parch up the inward tears of godly sorrow by the dry heats of a false defiance? It is not *we* that conduct all this sad strife and administer this deep experience; we neither fetch our own inspirations nor inflict our own retributions. It is a holier Spirit that broods near us, and flings athwart us his shadow or his flash; and till we have confused our vision, and let the transparent air grow thick, he comes to us with an authority that is its own credential. We well know that there is a sacrifice that we are on the instant called upon to make; of our pleasure, our repute, our anger, or our pride; and if we make it not, the shame and self-reproach which we suffer are not for our folly, not for our weakness only, but for divine affection spurned and natural reverence withheld.

There is a special characteristic, which is also a marvellous power, in the Christian mood of sacrifice. It is not the mere rallying of a better part of self against a worse; not the playing off of past resolve against the present weakness; not even an *obedience* to the Law by which heaven orders us to live; not any active, strenuous, spasmodic effort at righteousness; but a passing out of our own disposal into that of another; a quiet tender of the hand that we may be led; a withering away of evil by only looking into the eyes of the All-Good; a dropping of self-will by simply trusting

ourselves to the love that waits to rescue. It is a strength made perfect in weakness, of which mere moral conviction has no suspicion and to which, though nerving the most iron will, it can make no approach. For, in its very essence, it is the attitude of trust towards an infinite *Person*, a Holy Friend, for whose sake we surrender and at whose feet we fall. We do not, in such mood, tighten and compress what faculties we have, so as to harden our resisting power, like one that is trying not to cry out in pain; but, on the contrary, we relax the self-reliant struggle and fight no more; and softly leave ourselves to the dear God who communes with us and has strength enough for all. And so we do not set our face against the anguish and the strife, and plunge into it like diver into icy stream; but simply suffer the pain, whatever it be, to pass through us as a phenomenon, to move slowly or even settle if it will, and use us freely up, if only we are the fuel and God the kindling fire.

Is there then, I shall perhaps be asked, no room for the human will? no demand for activity of our own? If we are to place ourselves as mere material in the Divine hand, it would seem that all the claims upon us must be satisfied by a passive quietism.

This objection would be just, if, in yielding to God's will, we renounced our own, and committed moral suicide in order to live in him alone. Instead of this, the adoption of his will is the highest act of our own; the

abnegation only of our false self, the affirmation of the real and true. There is no substitution of the Divine for the human; but only a concurrence. We have still our alternative problem set before us, requiring us to choose whether we will give ourselves to some low and easy desire, or to a rival affection which we know to be consecrated by the preference of God. In this choice consists our moral activity, and the expression, —anything but passive,—of our responsible personality. But I submit that, to the spiritual aspect and power of the character, it makes all the difference, whether our higher choice is regarded by us as an exercise of our own judgment, guaranteed only by some balance of evidence or feeling; or as an acceptance of that which is already chosen of God, and identified with his perfect approval. In the one case, the conscience is apt to be full of anxiety and caution, as it thinks, ‘Here I must guide myself by my own light,’ and to fret and argue about the way, and to tread it at last as *its own path*, taken honestly on mere personal security. In the other case, it is an act of *trust* on which the conscience enters as it says ‘Here I am guided by the Heavenly hand’; and the affection which it follows, being identified with God’s, loses its individual character, with all the questionings and self-distrust and scruples which attach to whatever is personal: it speaks to us as transcendent and divine; and we have only to drop all reluctance and go with it,



and let it have its way with us, none the less sacred, though it be a *via dolorosa*. Must we, as the old religious writers say, “renounce our own reason and strength,” as the condition of sanctification? Yes; renounce them *as only our own*; to re-accept them, however, *as also God’s*, and therefore more than we are, and disposing of us with the authority of a divine perfection. And the sublime proportions to which they then, and then alone, can lift the human soul, strikingly attests the superiority of the spiritual over the mere ethical interpretation of conscience, and the simply rudimentary character of moral truth till it is absorbed in religious. The true goal of our being, even here, is to be “as those who are alive from the dead.” They, delivered from our tentatives and illusions, have immediate vision, we think, of things divine; no devious ways to track, no troubled doubts to solve; but only to look into the loving eyes themselves of all that is good and holy, and be moulded and glorified unconsciously by the play and power of that holy light. If we are to resemble them, it must be by reverencing the inward intimations of our supreme affections as already the communion of God with us, and so conforming to them as to have no other will, and unconditionally blend our life with his.

He is not however exclusively present as a Holy Spirit within us. He is Lord of nature as well as sovereign of the soul; distributing to each of us his

gifts or his privations as he will ;—the pulse of vigour or of suffering ; the faculty limited and cheerful, or large in thought and sorrow ;—the domestic lot lonely and even, or led by little children hither and thither to be tossed between the laughter and the tears of life ;—the heritage of toil or the trust of wealth ;—and all the outer incidents of our humanity. Here also, we have much to give up ; the most envied often not less than others ; for the surrender must be measured off from the ideal wishes within, not from the look of the lot without. Life, in its very essence, is movement and transition. Not what we have, but what we gain or lose ; not what we are, but what we are becoming ; not where we stand, but whence we come and whither we go ; constitute its real interest and worth ; and the only value of that ease and virtual stagnation at which men delusively aim is to provoke their desires, and stir up the fermenting energies that contradict and exclude it. But in a thousand ways there is a contrariety between our wishes and our world ; nay, between our most innocent and gentle affections and the scene given them to sweeten and adorn. And in meeting these sad ordinations, our own difference of mood may turn them to discord or to harmony. If we listen to our self-love, we shall estimate our lot, less by what it is, than by what it is not ; shall dwell on its hindrances, and be blind to its possibilities ; and, comparing it only with imaginary lives, shall indulge in

flattering dreams of what we should do, if we had but power, and give, if we had but wealth, and be, if we had no temptations. We shall be for ever querulously pleading our difficulties and privations as excuses for our unloving temper and unfruitful life ; and fancying ourselves injured beings, virtually frowning at the dear Providence that loves us, and chafing with a self-torture which invites no pity. If we yield ourselves unto God and sincerely accept our lot as assigned by him, we shall count up its contents and disregard its omissions, and be it as feeble as a cripple's and as narrow as a child's, shall find in it resources of good surpassing our best economy, and sacred claims that may keep awake our highest will. How many a prisoner of the sick-room, permitted to see life only through the window, and closing his eyes upon it in the midst of youth, has photographed on loving hearts an image of self-forgetfulness, of patient waiting, of bright affection, of rest in God, which has ever after presided, as a domestic saint over all the years ! Nay, is it not shame for us who follow in the train of One despised and rejected of men, and who point to the cross as the symbol of sublimest power, to murmur at a burdened and afflicted lot, as denying us scope for righteousness ? How trivial in magnitude are the widest differences of external condition, compared with the inward soul and its divine relations which belong to all ! *Any* life which admits of duty, love, and trust, is infinitely

more, upon its lowest terms, than all the increments of opportunity which circumstances can pile upon it; and those who yield themselves unto God well know how, in the sacred measures, the seeming inequalities disappear. The only life which is not worth living is not of God's giving, but of our own creation, the life of *no duty, no love, no trust*; which is indeed separated by an immeasurable interval from its opposite, and amounts to a spiritual suicide of our humanity. Nothing brings us nearer to the verge of this state than the nursing of selfish discontent. Nothing withdraws us further from it, than the childlike acceptance of our sphere as divinely limited, and divinely adequate.

Lest however our self-deception should pursue us even here, and tempt us to mistake unfaithful apathy for pious acquiescence, let us remember that no felt evil or defect becomes divine until it is inevitable; and that only when resistance to it is exhausted and hope has fled, does surrender cease to be premature. God forbid that I should seem to sanction with a single word that lazy and spurious resignation which gives way to the evils and infirmities it ought to cure, which bemoans the dust it has but to wipe away, and after poisoning by sinful negligence many a possible nobleness and joy, weeps at its sick looks when it begins to pine, and appears as chief mourner when it dies. Such a temper is but the rotting foliage of a dead religion; and must be left to its natural decay. But even for

the most vigilant and faithful there is appointed many a struggle with the inevitable, many a humbling defeat, many a surprise in the noon-day languor or at the evening rest, from ambushed and relentless miseries. And the hardness of our task,—the paradox of the Christian mind,—lies *here*; that we have to strive against the grievous things of life, while hope remains, as if they were evil; and then, when the stroke has fallen, to accept them from the hand of God, and doubt not they are good. But to the loving, trusting heart all things are possible; and even this instant change, from overstrained will to sorrowful repose, from fullest resistance to complete surrender, from hanging on the cross to folding it in close embrace upon the breast as emblem of all that is divine, is realised without convulsion. In our lower moods of grief or disappointment, we ask too many questions and cannot rest: we go on continuously from our time of conflict to our time of loss, and the sea still heaves when the wild storm is hushed. We want to know more than the silent God deems it good to tell; to understand *the “Why”* which he bids us wait to ask; to *see* the path which he has spread on purpose in the dark. The infinite Father does not stand by us to be catechised, and explain himself to our vain mind: he is here for our trust; and if we will but lean on him, our chafing heart shall sleep the sweet sleep of recovery. We must not carry the habits and exactions of vision into the hours of its loss;

if we do but take his hand, he will lead us as the blind by a way that we know not ; and we cannot go astray while he abides. In this spirit let us both act and move, and also stand and wait ; though sorrowing, yet always rejoicing ; as dying, and behold we live ; in all things “yielding ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.”

## VI.

### Obedience and Communion.

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JOHN xv. 15.

“Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth ; but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.”

JOHN xvii. 20, 21, part.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us.”

“SERVANTS,” and “Friends” ; the words describe the two relations in which the follower may stand to the leader,—the believer to his prophet,—the worshipper to his God ; and, in general, the lower being to the higher who directs him. The consciousness of dependence, producing submission, and the consciousness of resemblance, producing sympathy, are the two feelings which give rise at once to society and to religion ; which aggregate men into groups animated by a common heart, and counteract the opposite force of individuality and mutual repulsion. *Obedience and Communion*,—the one given by the *distance* between

souls,—the other by their *nearness*,—are the only forms in which an organising faith can manifest its energy. They have entered, with every variety of predominance and mixture, into the religions of the world; and whoever will look thoughtfully at their origin in his own nature will obtain no trifling test for appreciating the greatest agencies in history.

*Obedience*, it is evident, is an act of the *Will*. It is the business of a voluntary nature to give or to withhold it; and it is secured by whatever influences determine the movement of such a nature. Of these, the most obvious, though by no means the most powerful, are considerations of *interest*,—suggestions of hope and fear,—appealing to that desire of happiness, or rather that recoil from suffering, which belongs to all sentient beings. Obedience yielded through such motives is simply the tribute of weakness to superior power; a sacrifice extorted by necessity; an acquiescence indifferently given to the decrees of an iron Fate or the laws of the divinest Providence. It involves indeed no resistance or complaint;—but also no joyful acceptance,—no clasping of the thorny cross upon the heart: it is merely the neutral attitude of one who cannot help himself. No higher nature is needful for it than that of a sagacious animal; and perfect examples of it are seen in the horse or dog broken in to the service of his owner's will. Fitly is this submission characterised as *blind*; for it is paid, not to reason, but to force: it



discerns no ground of good, but only the rock of the inevitable : it issues from no transparent affection, but from the opaque pressure of instinctive self-defence. This is, no doubt, the original type of all proper *servitude*; in which the servant engages to do his master's bidding, and ask no questions ; to forego all rights of judgment and criticism, accepting another's decision in place of his own inclination, and obeying simply *because* it is commanded.

This however is a relation which cannot subsist between *souls*. It assumes that the superior being is the absolute *source*, the inferior the absolute *subject*, of the rule to be obeyed ; that the two natures are different in *kind*, the one remaining at an interval *outside* the other, and impressing upon it thence a direction which else its own spontaneous movements would never take. This obedience of interest can be rendered only to a purely physical sovereignty, like that of Nature's inexorable laws ; and those who render it can never turn round and say, ' you have no *right* to order this.' The moment you let in something more than the relation of weakness to strength,—the moment you substitute the sway of spirit over spirit,—you feel that the one can no longer hold the solitude of an independent nature above the other, and coerce it unconditionally from without. The higher is no longer at liberty to *impose*, or the lower to *receive*, a rule at will : neither is without an antecedent *inner* law, confessed alike by both, and

prescribing the constant conditions within which the greatest power must restrain the variations of its will, and the utmost weakness its disposition to obey. You can form no conception of a *mind* without this inner law,—this felt authority of a better over a worse,—this inextinguishable interval between right and wrong. It is the distinctive signature of Mind. It is the absence of this which allows the naturalist to proceed, in his classification of tribes and species, up as far as man; it is the presence of this which forbids his proceeding further,—warns him that *there* his province ends,—and blends into one vast kindred the whole universe of souls, whether men or angels, Christ or God. However widely these may differ from each other, it is by difference not in *kind*, entitling any to autocratic ascendancy over the rest; but in *development*, as the child from the parent,—the infant of days (it may be) from the Father of eternity. Nay, we might almost say that they differ little more than one and the same soul differs from itself at different times: for who is so thoughtless as not to have stood in awe before his own self-contradictions? What wider chasm separates hell from heaven than lies between the low and selfish mood, when mean passions win audience from us, and sluggish doubts hang idly on the heart, and fiendish fancies take all the wonder from the tales of crime;—and the high strength of resolution rising up to victory,—the grand calm of the accomplished sacrifice,—the sweet

submission,—the infinite aspiring,—the strange blending of utter passiveness with intensest action, which attend the retreat of earthly things before the conscious presence of our God? There is no diversity among different spirits that has not its type within the limits of the same; nor does that which makes the unity of the same fail to repeat itself in all.

Thanks to this unity of nature, no absolute sovereignty can exist among souls. The will, however weak, refuses to listen to a mere *must* from another will, however strong; and the necessity before which it would lie in still obedience when driven on by the wheels of a sightless Fate, will not pass unchallenged when a living and seeing guide directs the chariot of events. To win our submission, a spirit above us must appeal to other considerations than those of interest and fear; must convince us that it is not only *stronger*, but *more excellent*, than we; must evince a wisdom, a constancy, a clearness, which we do not possess and yet are able to discern; above all, must penetrate us with loving awe by a faithfulness purer than our own to that eternal law by which the true and beautiful and good are opposed to the false and base and wicked. Such a one rules me otherwise than the seasons, the pestilence, or the storm: he brings me to a quiet unlike the silent pain that watches for the morning, or the patience that looks for death: he wields no hard material sway: he imposes

no foreign unsuspected law : he asks and will have no blind compliance : he orders a service, and yet will have it free : he carries me away, not by keeping me blind, but by making me see : he lets in the light which my own unfaithfulness had obscured, and shows me where I am, what I serve, and whither I tend. My will falls under a new order of influence ; and if henceforth I follow him as Master of my soul, it is not with the obedience of *interest*, but with the obedience of *reverence*. It is surely plain to see in what the difference consists. We two,—far apart as we may be,—have now a certain deep thing in common ; he knows my struggles, and sees my humiliations ; I love him, because he owns the same sanctities ; I trust him, because they are clearer to his eye ; I cling to him, because he is truer to their worship. Thus have I *Communion* with him, a glad and solemn partnership in faiths and affections which might pass for only human and tender dreams if they were mine alone, but, when realised by him, are changed from surmises to revelations. If we were *equals*, our relation would be one of pure communion and nothing else ; but as I know the dimensions of his spirit to be greater, I feel that its compass lies beyond me, and there are parts I cannot touch : further than the sphere of our concurrence, he spreads a traceless margin of solitary greatness, towards which I can only stretch with the tension of a mighty hope. This margin is

no mere negation to me: as the place where our spirits meet is the seat of *communion*, so where they part do I plant my *trust*. There, though I cannot see my path, his hand shall lead me still; knowing how blessed his guidance in the light, in the darkness I will not let it go: his authority, that showed itself divine by finding a way, through the dull eye of my soul, for beams of heavenly insight, shall yet prevail when its flash has struck me blind. Thus, in all *religious* relations between different minds, there is a mingling of communion with obedience,—of nearness with distance,—of love with awe; and the communion, as an act of *vision*, is the prior condition of obedience, as the residuary act of blindness. Only where the light of the joint spirits fails, does the surrender of the darker to the brighter first begin. As obedience, without a basis in communion, could have nothing religious in it, and have no place in the intercourse of souls; so does it become nobler, freer, and more joyous, as the element of communion enlarges itself. The servant of an untried master, working with the eye-service of mere interest, earns a more bitter bread than the old family dependant in whom affection interprets and consecrates obedience, and who has trust enough to suspect no severity and believe in no caprice in his superior. The child, compassed about at first simply as the weak by an arm of strength, grows into silent sympathy with the limits that restrain him;

feels something obscurely answering to them within; is conscious of a shameful, heated mood, when they are evaded; and sees how disorderly a sight is the playmate who gives them no heed; and as this inner law rises into clearer unison with the outer, the yoke ceases to be felt; and a devout spontaneity achieves the work of compulsory suggestion. And in proportion as we sit at the feet of Christ, and by doing the will of his Father know of the doctrine whether it be of God, does servitude pass into discipleship: the depths of that divine nature open themselves before us: his parables are all beauty; his beatitudes, all truth; his whole being ineffably tender and sublime; and with this, his authority passes from without to within; and we hear him say, "Henceforth I call you not servants,—for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I call you *friends*."

Now there is in these days a spurious religion, which pretends to give us communion with God without obedience; which not only resolves the forces of nature into his energy, and its gloriousness into his beauty, and the duration of its cycles into his eternal evolution, but merges the soul of man into his being, and makes it but a breath,—a pulse,—a wave, of his ever-moving thought. This doctrine bids you forget your own centre, and spread your affinities abroad; listen to the wandering wind sighing through the forest depths; ride with the sea-bird on the heaving

sea ; widen the soul to the limits of the stellar light ; sympathise with the grass that grows, the leaf that falls, the mountain that stands through sun and storm ; and assures you that by thus mingling with the universe you are melted into God ; that by plunging with your individuality down into the unfathomable ocean, you pass from human to divine, and consciously lose yourself in that flood of power from which only in illusion are you disengaged. This physical relapse into God let no one confound with that spiritual communion with him, which none but a free individual mind, capable of making him its object and its end, can hold or understand. On the other hand, there are religions, more familiar and wide-spread, which demand obedience but deny communion. Such are all monotheistic faiths which, like the Mahomedan, insist chiefly on the absolute *Sovereignty* of God ; which enthrone him as the distant monarch above the likeness of created symbol and the approach of created souls ; which make his Will the arbitrary Source, instead of the holy and benign interpreter, of what is true and good. These systems leave an infinite chasm, visibly equal for all beings, between the Creator and his creation ; the holy are safer, but no nearer ; the sinful are in peril, but no further ; sympathy is repelled ; similitude is impossible ; the longing for communion, a hopeless presumption. Nothing is left but prostrate obedience to a Will that may not be questioned, and that

holds the resources of time and nature at command, to lift up the meek in triumph and overwhelm the proud with shame. It is the peculiarity of Christianity that it avoids both these extremes ; but, true to the very nature of things, neither dispenses with obedience nor asks for it but on the basis of communion. It doubtless addresses us in the imperative voice of divine right ; but not till it has made the whisper of our own conscience speak in the very same tones. It pronounces, with the calmness of inspiration, on the sublimest truths ; but not without transposing us into a temper in which those truths evidence themselves. No thunders from the Lord of storms hurl upon our ear the terrible ‘Thou shalt,’ and ‘Thou shalt not’ ; no lightnings from the desert’s mountain-throne proclaim our God as a consuming flame. His blasting light, refracted through the mind of Christ, breaks into the sweetest hues, and paints and glorifies the life it else would set on fire. His sternest law, mellowed by the voice of him that bare our woes, is turned from the crash of Fate into the music of Love. By visiting us through a mediatorial mind on the confines of the human and the divine, steeped in the sorrows of one realm and kindling with the affections of another, God has abolished the infinite distance between us, shown us that what is dear and beautiful to him is the supreme of sanctities to us, and brought us to feel that, however vast the interval between mind and



mind, all live upon the same thought, and shine by the same light, and contain the rudiments of that creative reverence for good whence the universe and life have been shaped into forms so fair. Not only in the medium, but in the matter and the manner of our religion, are we delivered from mere obedience into communion. The Son of Man does not speak to us as strangers to a voice like his: he never moves imperiously about, as among a race of spiritual serfs, who must be made to do an outside will they are not fit to comprehend. His tones are directed, not to overpower, but to penetrate. He does not bear down against resistance, but touches the springs of native force. He appeals as to souls that bear kindred with his own; that secretly know the right from which, in the misery of delusion, they have turned away; that deeply love the purity and power of heart they have so sadly lost; and feel the shame and sorrow of an alienation, boasted of perhaps as freedom, but lamented with the hidden sighs of exile. He speaks as if his diviner sphere of thought created no separation, and made no difference in the free outpouring of his soul. And so it really was: he had but to be himself and live that godlike life, to become a central light of human trust, and the most enduring object of human affection. I know no better answer to those who say that the mind of man has no perception of the Holy, and can vow no allegiance to the Divine.

This peculiar honour which Christianity pays to our nature,—this recognition of its diviner sympathies,—this claim of the highest kindred for it, is distinctly marked and fixed in outward expression by *the rite of Communion*. By this usage has Christendom, in every age, asserted and celebrated *the family relationship of all souls*. I cannot claim it, in the hard legal sense, as a rite imposed by the external authority of our religion; for it is the very point at which that religion forgets and renounces its authority, throws itself freely into the embrace of our affections, and boldly says, “if you cannot love me, I would not have you serve me.” But it is a usage which certainly embodies the sublimest and the most genial characteristic of our faith, beyond which there is not, in the whole realm of thought, a deeper or a kindlier truth. The communion of all spirits with one another, through their common clustering round the sanctity of Christ,—can there be a more glorious and humanising vision than that? As we draw together round the table where the divinest form invisibly presides, and the saintliest throngs of all history are gathered round, we only say, ‘Behold, there is but one heart for every age, one spirit for both worlds.’ As we stretch our hand upon the bread once broken by a blessed touch, we do but say, ‘All souls must feed on the same aliment of thought, and joyfully we take with thee, thou light and life of souls, the holy nutriment of the true and pure and good.’ As we

taste the emblem of his suffering, and watch it as it passes down through centuries of hands, we simply think, 'That cup of sorrow, healthful to the soul, we too must expect to drink; but if it comes from thee, O Lord, and bears thy blessing in the draught, then welcome the lot which passes us through a sacred shadow to the light of the serenest joy.' To decline this venerable usage is virtually to insulate oneself in Christendom; to own our religion as a personal obligation to oneself, but no tie of sympathy with the great and good who have vowed our vows and breathed our prayers; to proclaim Christ our private master, to whom we would yield a blind submission, not the elder brother of the vast kindred of spirits, around whose glorious form we crowd with devout recognition, and mighty unison of heart. Have we not enough to isolate us in the low life of this egotistic age, that we should coldly decline the consecrated link that binds us to the saintly chain of ages? Nothing that is servile, nothing that is superstitious can come in contact with a usage so true to the human and the Christian heart. It expresses only what is most rational, most free, most joyous, most affectionate in our religion; and transmits through Christendom the voice which once spake in that upper chamber in Jerusalem; "Henceforth I call you not servants"; "but I call you friends"; "for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have delivered unto you."

## VII.

### The Way of Remembrance.

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2 PETER iii. 1.

“I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.”

JOHN xiv. 26.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

HERE then the message of an Apostle, nay, even the teaching of the Holy Spirit, is identified with sacred remembrance; remembrance of holy words and deep impressions dropped upon the heart in the highest moments of life. The apprehension of divine things consists, it would seem, not in new discoveries, not in strained and laboured thought, but in the reawakening of the pure and simple mind, and the gathering up of every Christlike image and affection from behind and from within. To the ardent and reforming spirit, full of some dream of new religion, it may seem a poor thing to claim no more than this;—to reduce the Christian messenger to a mere monitor of the known,

and the services of this house to a provision against forgetfulness. How long, it may be asked, are we to be thus referred back to the past, as if its account were closed? how long to be wearied with the worn-out lesson which was dull to our childhood, and has not brightened for our maturity? Is it then true that, in divine things, there is no hope of more to learn, of higher points to win and wider horizon to be seen? and is the Church but a system of spiritual mnemonics for reviving that which would never keep alive of itself?

In spite of these reproachful questions,—nay, in answer to them,—I would dwell on the position, that Religion, in passing from mind to mind, can only proceed “by way of remembrance”; that spiritual teaching must always appeal to what is already there; that the whole difference between the deepest insight and the saddest blindness is that between the conscious and the unconscious presence of the same divine realities; and that, if we would bring the exile or the wanderer of faith to his true home, we have not to convey him over vast intellectual tracts to some new spot, but simply to open his eyes and let him see that he is there.

There are various paths of access by which one mind may reach another and convey thither a light and life unfelt before. You may impart to me direct *information*, appearing before me as witness of facts I had not

known, or painter of scenes beyond my range. It is thus that the traveller enlarges our picture of the world as it is ;—the historian, of the world as it has been ;—the naturalist, of the groupings and methods of terrestrial being ;—the astronomer, of the relative distribution and motion of the stars. Whatever is communicated to me in this way is added to my Science, not to my Religion ; opens to me more of nature, but nothing that is beyond nature ; and, even when reporting of human and historical affairs, is credible alike by the pious and the profane. This kind of knowledge is an outward thing, neutral to faith and no-faith ; both of which alike receive it, but oppositely interpret it. Were the most desolate dream of scepticism true, there would remain the same stock of perceptible facts to tell as now : the events of the past, the arrangements of the present, would still be there : our histories might stand upon our shelves : our museums would become no lie : the microscope would disintegrate the same objects into the same parts ; and the telescope would sweep no altered heaven. The great realities on which Faith reposes are not mere phenomena of either nature or history ; not finite laws, read in the observatory or detected by the calculus, and missed by the uninstructed thought of man ; not intellectual possessions entrusted to the learned, to be doled out as may be needed to the ignorant. And the Christian preacher who assumes this attitude, who stands before his fellows as the Scientific Lecturer

before his audience, teaching *downwards* as to a lower level, and professing to deliver information specially his own, misses the whole essence of the very truth he represents.

Again: in order to impress me with some fresh conviction, you may resort to another method: instead of instructing by information, you may try to carry me on with you from some common ground by *reasoning*. You may convict my doubts of inconsistency, my unbelief of folly: you may show that logically I *ought* to trust, to aspire, to love; that I am at variance with my own doctrine, if I do not live the life of faith,—do not set foot on my temptations, and rise above my griefs, and carry every cross upon the dolorous way with joy. Am I then *amended* because I am *convicted*? Does the rebuke of your right Reason lift me on the wing and bear me whither I would go? When the steps of your dialectic have led me to the verge of the Finite, am I not left there cold, trembling, and alone, with no eye awake that can look into the Infinite? Or when you have opened to me your “Evidences” and stripped me of all excuse for saying that the teachings of Christ were unaccredited, will they have more living hold of me tomorrow than today? Ah no! faith is something else than the residuary side of a dilemma; and remains dead as ever after all your refutations of unbelief. If you want the living sap to rise, you must do more than prove that the tree is not withered

and the earth is not dry: these are but conditions of *possible* outburst into green; and not till the spring sunshine beats and the mellow rain and winds sweep through, will the real foliage hang forth. To rely on intellectual methods for the direct advance of devout thought is to mistake philosophy for religion, and to introduce into the gospel that fatal canker which, in the ancient world, enfeebled and dissolved system after system, and left the most splendid remains of speculative genius and ethical wisdom on a social soil dark with unpitied miseries and festering with moral corruptions. Who does not know, out of his own heart, that he never was *reasoned* into holy wonder, love, or reverence? and who can fail to observe, that there is no fixed proportion between force of understanding and clearness or depth of religion?—that, of great *intellects*, some intensely believe, others never emerge from doubt? but that, of great and balanced *characters*, profound in affection, devoted in will, and lofty in aim, as well as discerning in thought, almost *all* are found reposing on a strength, and bending before an authority, Diviner than their own? It cannot be then in the comparing and critical Reason that the dynamics of faith are to be sought: there must be some higher power of the spirit through which we are to commune together upon holy things; and by trustful surrender to which we may become one in Christ.

And this power, already known to Plato as *remin-*



*iscence*, is no other than that appeal to Remembrance which Christ identified with the function of the Holy Spirit. This appeal, instead of passing *downwards*, like knowledge upon ignorance; or *forwards*, like reason from point to point; moves *inward*, towards a centre of faith and feeling that holds us all. It is by reversing our ambitious steps,—not by advancing into original ideas, but by relapse upon simple affections,—not by seizing new stations in philosophy, but by recovering the artlessness of the child, that we must find the joy of redemption and the wisdom of faith. No one was ever brought, I believe, into a purer and loftier state of mind, ever snatched from selfishness into love, from the deadness of sense to the life in God, without amazement that the awful truth should have been so near and sent no thrill through the dull heart, without a shudder at the guilty blindness to the sanctities close at hand; without a consciousness, as of one wakened from the night, that the stately forms of duty now so clear, and the fresh dawn of holy trust, have long been present as the dim suspicions of a dream. Whatever it be that touches our spirit and takes the film away,—be it a sorrow that makes us weak and low, or the contact of some saintlier mind, or the flash of a prophet's word or the music of a poet's strain,—it seems to speak to us as we are, to sink home into what was always there;—not so much to contribute what is foreign, as to reveal what is our own;—less to fetch in a light that is

not native, than to take our darkening hindrances away. That our response is so quick and our shame so deep, shows that it is not a new thought which is given, but an ancient affection which is struck; sleeping, it may be, but so full of waking possibilities that we seem to have known it, though not to have lived it, all before. Every conquering call to higher life comes to us by such "way of remembrance."

We have perhaps two sorts of memory, two ways at least in which we are referred to a prior state or given object, and enabled to recognise it as not new. There is the purely personal memory which reflects always the image of our individual selves; revives our actual experiences; writes our own biography; and hangs round the gallery of thought the portraits on which we love to gaze. Without this our being would have no thread of conscious continuity; our character, no liability to judgment; our affections, no root of tenacity. And often, no doubt, in the sphere of the moral life, an appeal to this personal memory may be as the cock-crowing to our faithless hearts; may seem to turn upon us the very eye of Christ, and send us to weep bitter tears. When something,—perhaps the flash of a phrase or the tone of an unforgotten psalm,—breaks into the inner chambers and loosens the images of the Past from their sleep; when the unspoiled years come back before us so rich and joyous with the possibilities we have lost; when the early tincture of a guiltless heart

bathes us once again like morning light upon the city lamps and steams; when upon the ear grown hard with selfish sounds float again the echoes of young vows and tender prayers; when some love purer than we have now opens its eye upon us once more and the pale features look at us from their transfiguration; when, from the thick climate of an unfaithful life, which muffles every call of God, we are replaced for a moment in the air of our fresh time where the tones rang out so strong and clear;—in the power of such a resurrection we are as the dead made alive again; and it is surely our “purer mind” that is “stirred” by such “remembrance.” And there are few lives that have not thus their secret store of natural pieties,—their holy font of sweet and reverent affections, wherewith to re-baptize the dry heathenism of the present.

But, besides this personal memory of our own past states, we have another, deeper and more refined but not less real; an *impersonal* faculty which has another object than our own individual selves; a power of recognising, as ever with us, the secret presence of a Holy, a True, a Good, that is *not* our own; that is above us, though within us; that has a right over us which may be slighted but cannot be gainsaid. How is it, that whoever says a thing of most solemn truth, or of deepest spiritual beauty, always appears *to speak for us* and shape our very thought? How is it that the manifestation of a soul greater and holier than ours bears down

upon us with irresistible authority, and that a Christ can only speak to us as a "Son of God"? No echo of our own opinions, no reflection of our egotistic tastes, ever elicits from us that uttermost surrender of assent, ever draws from us the deep "Amen," with which we respond to genuine holiness in thought or life. These things speak to us with a voice other than our own, a voice of higher command,—of appeal subduing and Divine,—that could only come from a higher being or a more heavenly world. So profound was the sense, with the greatest philosopher of Paganism, of this august and self-evidencing authority in our simplest ideas,—of the True, the Beautiful, the Good,—so startled was he by our instant recognition of them, not as novel strangers but as eternal guests,—that he deemed them, as I have already intimated, to be forms which the soul had brought with her from an earlier life, ideals dropped from heaven into the shadows of our human birth, like shooting stars reduced to serve us as our table lamp. Without maintaining that they are, in this literal sense, remembrances of a former heaven, we may yet accept them as the witnesses of a present God, the reminder of his communion with our hearts, the mingling of his spirit with our life. We need not go so far as any pre-existent state, and take our flight on so precarious a wing, to fetch down these lightnings of the mind. The Living Heaven is around us now: we are merged in the currents of its boundless sea;

and in proportion as we fall into conditions of accordant life, its pulsations reach and thrill our hearts. Where else indeed can the Spirit of God and the spirit of man really meet, and the divine pass into the human and the human into the divine, if it be not in the common love of whatever is pure and true and good? These are the windows of His tabernacle with us, susceptible of endless tracings with saintly forms and enrichment with gorgeous colour: only keep them clear with the fresh 'sprinkling of reverence and humility, and the Shekinah from within will outglow the pale human rays, and reveal the hidden Presence there. And so, when you wake up to the perception of deeper obligation, or the consciousness of a sanctity unfelt before, your instant recognition of it as ever with you, seen or unseen, does not deceive you: it is not a new glory that is kindled, but the dull *mind* that is cleansed; and if "the secret of the Lord" was not consciously with you, it only waited till you were among "them that fear him."

If these things are so, if, in the very frame of our nature and the constitution of the spiritual world, there is provision for drawing us to God; if, in addition to the outer manifestations of himself in every type of good up to his beloved Son, He himself abides with us in eternal watch; there is relief and hope for those who try to keep alive in each other's hearts the divine interpretation of human experience and duty. We,

whose office it is to dispense as we can the Word of life, have but to bring to your remembrance things that are already there, mingled with the name of God. We have nothing to invent of our own, but only to take of his, and ask you to own it as also yours. The burden of origination, the vain pretence of novelty, in giving voice to things eternal we may joyfully renounce. If Christ never deemed himself nearer to Heaven than when in presence of the childlike heart, then the resources of a devout life cannot be remote and of difficult access, but so nigh unto us, that, if we miss them, it is from their close presence rather than their distance. They lie, not in the newest truth, which only favoured minds can appreciate, but in the oldest affections, which may indeed lapse into unconsciousness, but whose sleep is not unto death. The divine claims, which demand us for a common holiness, do not wait to be discovered by any strain of thought, any subtlety of intellect, but are pressed home upon us by the pleadings of a Living Advocate who will never be silent and never remove. "Already taught of God," if we will but listen with a docile mind, we have only to retire to the last and inmost retreats of faith and love; and life will lose its weariness, affection its languor, and even death its grief. Be it ours, amid such memories of the Spirit, to find sanctity and peace!

## VIII.

In Him we live and move and have our being.

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ACTS xvii. 27, 28.

“That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him; though he be not far from every one of us; for, in him we live and move and have our being.”

PAUL, it seems, was the preacher of an open-eyed worship. He saw no piety, but only moping superstition, in memorials, whether on the smooth stone or on an empty heart, to a God unknown and anonymous. Altars confessing that they know nothing, philosophies that pretend to know everything, stood before the Apostle who knew a little and lived in it; and that light of direct faith had only to appear, to put at once to shame the affectations both of ignorance and pride. To adore you know not who, to fling your homage into the dark, to mutter gratitude or terror into the ear of vacancy,—he felt to be no *worship*; which implies the reverent approach of mind to mind, the living intercommunion of spirits that have a thought and

sympathy between them. And, on the other hand, to produce from the Schools a neat program of the universe, set and framed, to carry the expository finger through it with familiar conceit; to make out that there is nothing over us but (with the Epicureans) the forces, or (with the Stoics) the intellectual order, of nature;—is to destroy devotion at the other end,—to pretend a universal light which shows that there is no One there,—to petrify into Fate every object of trust and hope and love. If the contented ignorance was abject, the assumed knowledge was delusive. It sprang from a false posture and direction of the mind: not from a humble “feeling after *him* (God) to find him,” but from an arrogant grasp at *it* (Nature) to embrace it with a thought; not from the prayer of moral aspiration breathed into the infinite, but from the struggle of scientific conception to compress everything into the finite. The Apostle’s opposite to *ignorant worship* is not *scientific non-worship*, but the devout insight of conscience and faith laid open to God’s own light. To find Him, you not only *need not*, but you *must not*, go into the distance away: “he is not far from any one of us”; and the long wing and the cold flight are the surest way to miss him. There are two different tempers in which we may address ourselves to the search after him. We may set ourselves, as it were, *over against* him, and remaining self-possessed and self-inclosed, may cast our look around the space where



he is, and register several of his acts, and try to scrutinize him as an object, and make out the true reading of his character. Or, instead of sitting thus outside, we may remember that *we also* are part of the scene in which he lives,—and *that part* too which is certainly the *nearest* and certainly the *highest* given to our apprehension; that it cannot be needful to strain our eye on Arcturus and the Pleiades, when we bear within us a more spacious heaven and a holier light; or to wait till we have arranged the strata of the old earth, when our own soul contains a hierarchy of affections, in which his presence is immediate and his will assured. In the former mood we take the track of speculation; we see whatever sense can show, and we end with such system as intellect can frame, and look ever after for God in the mirror we have made. In the latter mood we stay at home and muse on what is there; and *that* too, not in order to put it into intellectual parcels, and stow it away on the shelves of a theory; but, encountering the temptations from below and the drawing from above, to know the one as Satan and the other as God; whom therefore we meet, not in the impassive mirror of a doctrine, but eye to eye, life to the living, soul to soul. When we try the former path, we come back with the conviction that we have found our God: when the latter, we know that our God has found us. In the one case it seems as though his nature were at a stand-still, while we

busied ourselves to collect its symptoms and make it out; in the other, as though we rested to await his call, and all the intense spiritual action, the mighty wind of inspiration, the royalty of holy will, were his, and brought their appeal to our submissive soul. If haply you would feel after him to find him, no sweep of the universe, no wandering in foreign fields of time or place, no "thought wound up too high for mortal man beneath the sky," would bring you nearer to his trace: "his word is *very nigh* unto thee,—in thy mouth and in thy heart"; in the language of natural love, in the contrition of stricken conscience, in the spirit of daily service, and the sigh of eternal aspiration.

I know not how it is; but men do not seem to enter into this *living* sense of God, as the instant, everflowing sanctity of life, that bathes the hours of their own time, and passes across their own souls with the wave of regeneration. How the Apostolic Scriptures labour to express and quicken this consciousness! With what reality they speak of divine things in the present tense; and *that*, not as fetched into it by a paroxysm of miracle, but as continuous and never past! "In him we *live*, and *move*, and *have our being*"; "his Spirit beareth witness with our spirit"; and "helpeth our infirmities," the medium alike of their sorrowful cry and his soothing response: does "not leave us alone" and "comfortless," but "takes up his abode with us," and makes us "one with the Father and the Son."

Has this language lost its meaning for us? Do we perversely credit it all to the first Christian age, and leave it embalmed there as the corpse of a bygone time? Do we set the all-consecrating Presence at an historic distance, and in a Holy Land,—anywhere but in the room where we dwell, the Church where we pray, the task with which we strive? Where then is *our* God? What, think you, will he do ere the clock strikes twelve? Take me to his vestiges: find me his path of *life*: set me in the passing wind as he moves by. You say, He is *everywhere*: then show me *anywhere* that you have met him. You declare him *everlasting*: then tell me *any moment* that he has been with you. You believe him ready to succour them that are tempted, and to lift those that are bowed down: then in what passionate hour did you subside into his calm grace? in what sorrow lose yourself in his “more exceeding” joy? These are the testing questions by which we may learn, whether *we too* have raised our altar to an “unknown God,” and pay the worship of the blind; or whether we commune with him “in whom we live and move and have our being.”

No language,—not even that of Prophets and Apostles, can represent the infinitude of God; can have the depth, the flash, the serene purity, to report his nature. In different ages, the attempt is made in different ways. In the last century, preachers who would take away the distance and negligence of religion used to dwell on the

*Omnipresence* of God. And doubtless it brings a solemn stillness into the soul, to look into the concave of night and say, 'This field of silence is all his own: around the moon, beneath the earth, behind Orion, and here in front of the cloud that now dims his belt, spread through the span of the milky way, and down the track of that shooting star, He is and ever was and ever will be.' But this thought is too motionless and cold to suit our passionate nature: it says little else but what is true of lonely and lifeless Space: it crystallizes us into a sand grain, and renders him a wilderness that holds the worlds: and even when the cosmical beauty, the rhythmic order, the enduring balance of the whole are referred to him, as well as its illimitable magnitude, we still gain only an object of intellectual contemplation, that approaches us with no sympathy, and mildly absorbs our wasteful griefs, carrying off our tears in evaporation, and our cries in waves that die away. Hence we feel the need of some thought less still and dead than this of "*Omnipresence*"; and we fly to the language of the Apostle, which is all movement and fire; which deals not with Space, but with humanity; and looks into the universe not through the serene telescope, but through the quick personal eye of enthusiasm and love. He teaches us to conceive of God, not simply as a *Presence*, but as the *Life* of all: not as the diffused *Intellect*, but as the penetrating *Will*, of the universe: not as an ethical atmosphere that

broods, but as an almighty wind that sweeps wherever spirits are; as the *Power* that *worketh* in us,—that distributeth gifts,—that mingles with the thoughts, that helps the least self-sacrifice and humbles the proudest self-idolatry. We are sometimes told that this tracing of Divine energy both within and without, this identification of natural powers with Divine Causality, is *Pantheistic*; and there are men who think it more fatal to lose the universe in God, than God in nature; though it would seem, if one or other must be lost, the devouter fate would be to be left alone with the Infinite Spirit than with the finite creation. But there is no truth whatever in this frequent charge: as a few explanatory words will suffice to show.

What is this "*Pantheism*" of which we hear so much? Can we gain any precise idea of it, without going out of reach of the common understanding? I believe we can; and as the doctrine, when really developed, is justly esteemed a desolating error, it is of some consequence to have a criterion by which to know it when it appears.

When the Apostle says that "*In him*, we (and with us all things else) live and move and have our being," we think of an enveloping presence, keeping all creatures in existence, and interfused amid their theatre of space. They cannot pass beyond him: every way he goes as far as they. *In position*, they are in no instance outside him: *in time*, they were

never before him : *in power*, they have nothing that he does not lend. He is the field that holds them ; he is the essence that fills them and makes them what they are. So far, all seems clear, and we have not exceeded the bounds of doctrine which a Christian may maintain. God is coextensive with the universe. But what shall we say now to the converse ? Is the universe also coextensive with God ? Does he come to an end with it ? or possess no other endlessness than its illimitable dimensions provide ? Is his presence exhausted within it, or does he also fold it round ? Were it to perish, would he still no less be there ? When you have reckoned up its laws and movements, have you gone through all the contents of his being, and finished the story of the life of God ? If so, you are not a Christian, nor even a Theist, but a *Pantheist*. Whoever says in his heart, that God is *no more* than nature ; whoever does not provide *behind the veil of creation* an infinite reserve of thought and beauty and holy love, that might fling aside this universe and take another, —as a vesture changing the heavens, and they are changed ; whoever fancies the universal order not a free choice but a necessary development of his perfections ; is bereft of the essence of the Christian faith, and is removed by only accidental and precarious distinctions from the atheistic worship of mere “natural laws.” He may retain more or less of the idea of an *intellectual principle* as mixed up with the matter of things, and

weaving itself out into a texture of beauty and order. But there is nothing to secure it there : it has no grasp and almighty hold of nature as in the hollow of a spiritual hand. Nay, the very notion which these believers have of mind itself becomes amphibious and sickly : it only pants in the air, and cannot keep to the water : if they talk of " Spirit," it is only matter in a mist,—a turbid chemical cloud of magnetism and mesmerism which may serve to conceal an idol, but can only dissolve the thought of God. We find it, for instance, sometimes admitted that the universe is pervaded by an energy of Will, for ever pressing towards ends of its own, and organising the means suitable for their attainment ; and we seem to be in the presence of the familiar argument from Design, which traces everywhere the vestiges of intending intellect. But no : the so-called " Will " is blind, and without thought ; and though it is always *at* something, never knows what it is at ; not at least till it has worked itself up into the form of human intelligence, and become capable of pre-conceiving its own drift. When from the word " Will " you have thus drained off all reference to conscious and selecting aims, its essence is gone and nothing is left but fatalised force. So again, every system of Evolution which proposes to dispense with an intellectual initiative for the universe, and to postpone the appearance of Mind upon the scene of things till the genesis has reached its climax, has either no God distinct from the

sum total of finite thought, or at least a God that has a birthday among originated things. A world which begins with the unconscious and only ends with being divine makes its own God, instead of being made by him, and cannot pretend to have any object of worship. To account for such supposed emergence of Reason and Will out of elements irrational and blind, we are sometimes asked to be more liberal in our allowance of properties to matter, and instead of treating it as only solid and extended, to invest it also with inherent motion, and even life and incipient perception. This however is no longer matter pure and simple, but matter and something more; and the "more" that is demanded is plainly mind in the germ, inserted because without it there could be, it is felt, no mind in the result. With a germ, if you can secure it, no doubt a great deal may be done, and it is a clever device of the physical expounder to pack one, unnoticed, into every atom, in readiness to yield him what he wants beyond mere mechanical phenomena. The union however is quite incongruous; for while the conception of an atom is resorted to precisely because it is elementary (extended solidity presupposing nothing) we know of germs only as the product of perfect beings; so that in your starting point for future natures you are incorporating what implies these natures already in the past. This kind of mixed material, composed of matter in the present and mind in the future, or consisting of the bare



necessity of both, has always been in favour with the Pantheist; and, once assumed, enables him to speak of nature as permeated by a principle of thought. But this only means that there is something in it which gives rise to thought among its ulterior phenomena; not that Infinite Thought supplies its cause, its life, its end. In short, the problem admits of simply this alternative: can the lowest element create the highest? or does it need the highest to give origin to even the lowest? No one could affirm the former, unless he did something to glorify his "lowest element," and give it some show of competency for its too arduous task; hence all the fine things, including self-subsistence, inventively attributed to the physical substance of the world: they are devices for helping it to do what is impossible, and what, if done, would still constitute an effect out of all proportion to its cause. By no mystical transfiguration of matter therefore are we to be withdrawn from the other side of the alternative; which prefixes the free and infinite Mind of God to every system of finite objects and events. His originating relation to them does not cease, because it has begun: his causality is permanent and interior to them, so that their whole natural history is but the method of his will. The kernel therefore of a true and Christian faith in him seems to be this: that, though he is in nature, its very life and loveliness and only power, yet nature is a small thing to him; that chiefly He is

*præternatural*; that all laws and visible life are but the superficial pulsations, the partial lines, of an infinite depth of thought and love behind; that in our worship we have to do, not so much with his finite expression in created things, as with his own free self and inner reality; and that all *religion* consists in *passing nature by*, in order to enter into *direct personal relation* with him, Soul to Soul. It is *not* Pantheism to merge all the life of the physical universe in him, and leave him as the inner and sustaining power of it all. It *is* Pantheism to *rest* in this conception; to merge him in the universe and see him only there; and not rather to dwell with him as the Living, Holy, sympathising Will, on whose free affection the cluster of created things lies and plays, as the spray upon the ocean.

It is not however of external nature, but of man himself, that the apostle speaks as subsisting in God. "In him *we* live, and move, and have our being." Are we then, like the heavens and the earth, but phenomena of his ordered activity? and our faculties, like the energies of the natural world, only the ways of his operation? In my acts of memory, is it he that remembers? of understanding, he that reasons and learns? of affection, he that loves? Then, in my sin, it must be he that falls, and that, in my contrition, returns to a right mind. It is evidently impossible thus to fling into his nature the phenomena of which we are the conscious subjects, and to enforce upon our

mental power, as upon the physical powers of the world, an abdication in favour of his sole energy. One *personal* existence cannot be merged in another, so that there shall be only a single agent for the acts of both: the artist who copies the beauty of the world is other than the Creator who invented it; and the mind that discovered the law of gravitation is not the mind that enacted it. Nor does the apostle's language imply any such absorption of man in God. To "live," to "move," to "have our being,"—these are not *personal* acts; for they all belong to impersonal natures, and to us simply as animated organisms; and to refer them to him is only to treat the dispositions and energies of the natural world as the functions of his power. I do not suppose that Paul, with all his theocratic enthusiasm, would have said, "In him we *think*, and *compare*, and *choose*"; for when he passionately denounces the weakness of the *human self*, these are the very acts which he charges it with performing amiss. Even if he had made this larger affirmation, it would have meant no more than that the fund of power on which we draw in executing this personal operation is placed by God at our disposal: a doctrine at once owning his part in our life, and limiting it to the concession of free agency to us.

But does not the apostle break the bounds of his explanation when he declares that God "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure"? Here he

speaks not of any loan of divine power for us to use at our good pleasure ; but of God's immediate production in us of volitions and acts at his good pleasure. Undoubtedly, if this dictum must be understood as a universal assertion, that *all* will and action of ours is God's inward working, it involves complete theological determinism, and the total extinction of all finite agency. But so to construe it is greatly to overstrain the intention of the passage. It means only that our willing and acting are *so far* controlled by God, as to make sure of the ends which he contemplates : *i.e.* that our freedom is *not unlimited*, but stops short of the power to defeat his purposes. Any such frustration is excluded from the range of possibilities which he allows ; and were there any danger of it, there is open communion between his free spirit and ours, through which the needful recall may be given behind the springs of the will. Indeed, but for our having *some* freedom, there would be nothing for him to control : no question could arise between his " good pleasure " and anything else. Had we nothing of our own, no faculty, no personal unity, there would be nothing for him to " work " upon, and turn into the paths of his design. Even in order to be overpowered and neutralized, the self must at least exist ; and exist it does not, unless as a selecting mind and executive will.

There is a difference, then, in the relation sustained to God, between ourselves and other finite objects on

this scene of being. So far as we also are *things*, we, no less than they, subsist in him. So far as we are *persons*, we are set up for ourselves, entrusted by his will with a certain store of individual faculty, and by his abstinence protected in its free exercise upon alternative possibilities. If here also we may be said, in any intelligible sense, to subsist "in him," it is only as an *enclave* shut in by his embracing empire; an area of the same continent, affected by the same physical conditions, demanding much of the same culture; but in its moral life as a common-wealth, left to self-government, and not absorbed by the universal mechanism. This essence of our being, this secret place of the conscience which he will enter with sympathy, if we seek it, but never with coercion, overpasses the limit of necessary law on the inner side no less than God's transcendency beyond the kosmos overpasses it on the outer; and as he guards it in reality, so must we guard it in thought from any pantheistic flood which may break in to sweep the divine land-marks away. More than the whole of the universe, he is less than the whole of our humanity. He respects our personality. He asks for our free love, and invests us with power to give or to withhold it. He appeals to us for quite another obedience than that which is rendered by the trees and clouds and stars. This reserved ground it is, granted to us as our own, which saves us from being lost in his infinite causality. Nature therefore is far from being all in all. It lies

enclosed between the human spirit at the centre, and the Divine Spirit embracing the circumference : itself, no doubt, quite sacred, as the methodised action of God ; but leaving a yet more sacred element, in the moral relations of responsible minds, in the drama of temptation, fall, or victory ; in the communion of personal affection ; and the final harmony of the finite will with the Infinite Perfection.

## IX.

### That the Christ ought to suffer.

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LUKE xxiv. 26.

“Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”

IF the Man of Sorrows himself could thus plead the propriety of his own sufferings, it was not for others to make complaint of their severity. Yet long after Jesus, whose mind seems at one time to have been flushed by brilliant anticipations, had resigned himself not only to the general conception of a despised and afflicted Christ, but to the personal realization of the contempt and anguish in his own life, his countrymen and even his immediate followers turned away from the thought in scorn and anger. Such a notion appeared a plain denial of the whole design of the heavenly kingdom,—a direct contradiction of the meaning comprised in Messiah’s name. He was no other than the representative of the nation’s splendour, so long deferred;—the symbol of their greatness; the heroic image of all the scattered glories of their history; and how could

such an office be fulfilled unless he reversed, instead of repeating, in his own person, the woes and depression of his people? He was to be, moreover, the vicerent of God upon the earth; the agent of his world-administration, and the awful emblem of his character and presence among men; and how could this be, unless he were exempted from the infirmities which are human, not divine, and were manifested in a majesty incapable of humiliation, and unclouded by grief? whether as the type of the national grandeur, or as the vicarious regent of heaven, it became him *not* to suffer, but rather to enter into his glory.

Experience has taught us that such as Messiah was expected to be, he by no means actually *was*; that the poor design of his advent, drawn by the lofty but narrow genius of his people, was disappointed and infinitely surpassed; that the *essential idea* of his office, that is, the idea registered in the purposes of heaven, proved quite different from the historical conception, long cherished in the oriental regions of the earth. We can trace the mode in which the great reality of God developed itself from the paltry imagination of men. And specially we know, that the Christ was no national hero, but the grace and glory of humanity; the ideal, not of Hebraism and its history, but of man and his existence; the reflection, not of the avenging Jehovah of Palestine, but of the gracious Father of the mortal and immortal worlds. Yet it



may be doubted whether, with all the advantage of later experience, we should antecedently have inclined, more than the Hebrews, to choose a representative, outwardly clad in the garment of poverty and shame, and inwardly with the spirit of grief. If we had been left to frame for ourselves an emblem of whatever is divine *within* and *above* our human life, to invent a mind that should exhibit the perfection of man and give hints of the spirit of God, one of the first thoughts would have been, "Such a one must be lifted above the infirmities and vulgar conflicts of our being : he must live in the grandeur and serenity of God, who ever acts and never suffers ; or if drawn at all within the limits of sorrow, must be untouched by the meaner and more shameful ills that flesh is heir to." To our coarse and superficial judgment dignity and happiness are essential to perfect being ; human tradition fills its Paradise with sweets ; poetry envelops its heroes with glory ; religion thrills its heaven with transport ;—dreams, every one, of anxiety and appetite, having greatness of scale without sanctity of spirit. Singularly did Providence deviate from this, when he took up that Galilean Son of Man, and said, "Behold my likeness and your ideal ; my holy one that cannot see corruption ; the mediator who shall win the love of earth and carry it to heaven ; the image of God, and the Messiah of humanity." In the surprise and originality of such announcement, in the new direction which it gives to our quest of the great

and divine, together with the entire assent which our deeper and purified affections subsequently give to it, consists its power as a Revelation. If it simply answered to our own earlier conceptions, and realized our poor imaginings, it would but repeat an influence already spent. If it failed to reach at last our inmost conscience and find therein a deep ‘Amen,’ it would unlock no fresh spring of our nature, and reveal nothing to our spiritual apprehension. Repugnance at the beginning, and in the end the deep response of emphatic consent, constitute the characteristic reception of every true revelation to mankind. How well and wisely our natural anticipations have been reversed, it is now easy to show in retrospect; how truly suitable it was to the Messiah of heaven,—the representative of what is divine in the life of man and the intelligible nature of God, to “suffer these things, and to enter into his glory.”

It was needful for the Christ to suffer, if he were to be the emblem of the *life of man* in its most sacred form. Otherwise indeed his lot would not have been truly human, and would have attracted, not the fruitful sympathy, but the barren longings of struggling men. His exemption from grief would have removed no disciple’s sorrows; his endurance has consecrated them all; has shown how much higher may be the spirit that can glorify them, than the skill that can escape them; has revealed to us how small a part of them may

be their painfulness. No one who has followed the steps of the prophet of Nazareth, and listened in thought to his voice of sad affection, and beheld him in his lonely watch by night with full and earnest eye upon the stars, and overheard the farewell converse when he bequeathed his peace, and seen how on Calvary even the cross could lose its power to impart disgrace, and rather received an everlasting glory, can longer feel amazed that one who was to elicit what is holy from our life, should be so deeply acquainted with grief. In truth, there is no religion, no worship, in our prosperity and ease. So far as we are happy, we are in a state of satisfied desire ; so far as we are religious, we are in a state of aspiration and unsatisfied desire. In the one state we shut ourselves in, and sleep within the fence of our possessions ; in the other we lie open to the infinite universe, and keep the vigils of the exposed and trustful. While we perpetually aim at the attainment of sated and contented feelings, we must be conscious that these belong to the lowest condition of the mind ; that they ally us to the drowsy quiescence of creatures that have only to eat and be filled ; and that in our inability to realize this aim, in disappointment ever renewed, in thoughts and affections ever transcending all our possibilities, consist all the noble unrest, the progressive goodness, the immortal capacities, of our nature, rendering it the creator of poetry, and the moral creature of God. By

assigning to us the hard conflict with various necessities, by filling us with conceptions that press with vehement and often agonizing remonstrance against the limits that confine them, by giving us an understanding that wanders beyond the allotted light, a moral sense that overpasses all practicable achievement, a mutual love that reaches further than the longest term of human years, God has taken the solid ground of rest from beneath us, and dropped us into the midnight immensity in which he dwells. But the misguided heart of man became rebellious, instead of religious, at all this; chafing only and fretting against evil, transmuted it into no good; but found in it only dry and parching pain. And so one thing was wanting still; a Messiah or divine spirit for this department of humanity; who should show forth the contents and sanctity of sorrow, create an ideal for the sternest and saddest realities, and turn towards the earth the heavenly side of suffering.

And may we not say that some such result has really followed; that some water of life has been opened to assuage the fever-thirst of wounded and panting humanity? Since the evening of Gethsemane how many lips, in the composure of prayer, have cried "Not my will but thine be done"! to how many tortured hearts has the thought occurred, not without a pure content, "It is enough for the disciple to be as his master"! Has not the crucifix become for ages the

symbol of grief divinely borne? has it not, generation after generation, been hid in the bosoms of thousands, sustaining the soul of self-denial, and reminding them not to faint beneath the cross of life? Has it not met the eye of many a lonely captive, and beguiled him to forget his chains, and from its meek image spread through his dungeon the holiest light? Has it not kept watch with the mother by night, as she bent over her sick child, and been to her soul as a star amid the infinite darkness of her sorrow? Pressed to the lips of the living, and softly laid upon the breast of the dying, it has warmed the love of the Christian while he stays, and given him trust when 'tis time to go. The universal distribution of this emblem in countries where it exists, truly represents the unparalleled diffusion of the influence it represents: in the meanest cottage and the most gorgeous palace, in the little oratory by the roadside of the village and the minster of the proudest city, it presents its memento to faithful souls. And who can say that it is not a glorious thing, that a thought so divine as that of Christ, the Man of sorrows and the stricken lamb of God, should altogether penetrate the spirit of so many centuries, and be borne to the inmost heart of the poorest peasant, and everywhere turn the moans of anxiety and anguish into a plaint of heavenly music? It was in his parting sorrow that Jesus asked his disciples to remember him: and never was entreaty of affection answered so: for

ever since has his name been breathed in morning and evening prayers that none can count; and has brought down some gift of sanctity and peace on the anguish of bereavement, and the remorse of sin. Herein is Christ's truest glory; and "ought he not therefore to have suffered these things, and entered into his glory?"

It was needful again for Christ to suffer, if he were to be the emblem of the *soul of man*, in its most sacred aspect.

Human character is never found "to enter into its glory," except through the ordeal of affliction. Its force cannot come forth without the offer of resistance, nor can the grandeur of its free will declare itself, except in the battle of fierce temptations. Whatever be the solution of the great problem of evil, as it affects the character of God, there can be no doubt as to its relation to the character of man. Whatever is lofty and noble in life and history, whatever lifts us by some celestial attraction above the downward gravitation of self, it has been the function of suffering to create. All that is vast and majestic even in our material and mechanical life, the successes of engineering on land and water, is the result of labouring *thought* coming down upon the theatre of creation, grappling with its mightiest energies, and chaining the captive Titans of the rock, the storm, the ocean, to the triumphal car of human improvement. And wherever anything morally

great arrests our eye, it is always that conscience or love have been summoned to the field, and have not declined the war; that obstructions, of condition or of opinion, have beset some felt obligation, and the mind has yet burst through the entanglement, and determined to be free; that, for example, the arts of tyrants or the ignoble sleep of a people's better mind, have threatened the higher franchises of a nation's thought or speech or action, and some one has been content to stand alone and perish with expostulating death; or that in private the inquisition of some dreadful torture has vainly tried to crush forth a querulous confession, or some deep grief been hid beneath the silent and cheerful toil of duty. All the pure brilliants of history stand forth from the night of darkest necessity, and make a heaven of what else were the dreariest abyss. Whatever is higher than happiness is revealed to us only in the loss of happiness; and that which is highest of all, the life of religion, the sense of sanctity, the allegiance to God, find no place within us, till we are cast down in true affliction. Yes! when the temple of devotion constructs itself within the soul, the subterranean crypt of sorrow is the part which, though soon invisible, is first and deepest laid; and though, once hid beneath the pavement, it is perhaps forgot as it lurks beneath the glorious aisle, yet the hollow tread of awe would soon be lost, and the music's mysterious reverberation cease, were its ancient passages closed up with earth.

In saying this, of course I do not mean that no one can be devout, unless and until he is exposed to poverty, or bereavement, or disease, or other outward infliction; and that the prosperous are disqualified for being the pious. Disappointed aspiration of *some kind*, desire stretching far beyond attainment in *some direction*, I do believe to be essential to the sentiment of religion: thus only can we be conscious how far the dimensions of our souls transcend the limits of our lot, and make us the children of the Infinite. But it need not be, and it ought not to be, the defeated appetite for happiness that teaches us this truth; it is an ignoble mind that waits for this, and does not find on what a world 'tis cast, till its pleasurable sleep be broken. The unsated love of truth impels the earnest reason to sigh for increase of light; the sense of moral beauty, the idea of right, the perception of the intrinsically good and holy, are ever mortified by our poor performance, and weep the tears of an unspeakable repentance. And our mutual affection God has made so great, so unreasonably deep, that it craves many an unfulfilled condition, and breathes a thousand disappointed prayers; and even where it achieves the good it seeks, it is often by glad self-sacrifice, the welcome martyrdom of faithful souls: for no considerable blessings are procurable for others, under the Providence that rules us, without large denial to ourselves. And so there is room enough for various



sorrow in the mind itself, without harrowing the outward lot; and where the field of life is greenest and brightest with the culture of prosperity, the seed of true faith may be dropped in the deep furrows of self-mortification, and grow beneath the dews that penitence weeps by night. It was not, then, without reason that the prophet pronounced a “woe on those that were *at ease* in Zion”; or that Jesus demanded from his disciples a self-renunciation like his own. If it is within the *shadows* of the soul that God retires and makes his spirit felt, it was well that Christ, the image of all that is sacred within us, should walk on earth within the cloud of so much grief. If the purest lustre and power of our nature comes forth from the severity of trial, it was fit that he, our Christ, should suffer, and thence emerge into his glory.

It was not till after his resurrection that Jesus was prepared to show, for the conviction of yet reluctant minds, that he ought to have suffered; and that no complaint could stand against the Providence by which he had been stricken. The agony over, the peril past, in the calmness of an immortal’s thought, he saw it all; and as he expounded the ways of God from deep experience, he made the hearts of his companions burn within them. And in this too, is he not an image of ourselves? We recoil from all affliction, ere it comes: our cross appears too heavy to be borne; and in the Gethsemane of our anguish we cry aloud in darkness;

and as oft as we sob and pray, we still say the same words, "let this cup pass from us!" But when we have been led away and passed the dreadful hour, and see it all in retrospect, not with the eye of mortal fear, but with the glance of a diviner wisdom, we comprehend how we ought to have suffered these things, and wonder at our former doubts, and try, perhaps in vain, to convey to others the tranquil persuasion so deep within ourselves. May we not say, that these after-thoughts of our mortal grief are forethoughts of our immortal peace; showing under what fair and quiet aspect will then appear the stormiest passages of life; and how the very glory into which we have entered, came, like the rainbow, from the glow of God upon the chilliest and blackest sky.

Even when we consider the Christ as the emblem of God, rather than the representative of man, it is not difficult to perceive why he ought to have suffered these things. Deity, it is true, cannot suffer; and the conflict and agony of Jesus can teach us no direct lesson of the Father who was with him; and it might even seem as if a total exemption from affliction would better, and with more of truth and majesty, have displayed to us the being whom he revealed. Yet surely, on nearer thought, we shall be convinced, that mere immunity from pain would have given a very poor and a very false idea of God's elevation above vicissitude. In the contemplation of a perfect being, it is not his out-

ward removal beyond the reach and touch of ill, not his mere privilege of rank lifting him into a region free from harm,—it is not this that gives us the strongest impression of his greatness. This is but natural or physical divinity; not its moral and spiritual majesty; it is the impassibility of a mind without emotion. And Christ has surely left us an image of something diviner far than this, in the power to quell and drown intense suffering with the flood of pure and sacred sympathies; in the transcendency of thought and tranquillity of faith, which the pulses of anguish vainly strove to reach and overwhelm; in his triumph over evil by simple and entire preoccupation of soul with duty, love and goodness. And meekly as his head was bowed upon the cross, never surely could an impression of more godlike power be left; never could evil appear more utterly baffled; never could guilt shrink more ashamed even from the eye of Omniscience itself, than when the prayer went forth, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Victim as he was, he was the conqueror then; and all who realize his spirit may, in like extremity, become “more than conquerors through him that hath so loved them.”

## X.

### The Soul's forecast of Retribution.

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ISAIAH xi. 2 (part), 3 (part).

“The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding ; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord ; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.”

IN no respect does the language of religion more violently offend the common understanding, than in the sharp division it makes of all mankind into saints and sinners. The world as it moves before our eye presents nothing like this twofold classification ; which appears not only to confound every finer distinction of character, but to overlook broad differences recognised even by human law and conspicuous to the least cultivated perception. Such an arrangement seems to run counter to all the phenomena of society and the experience of life. No schoolmaster could distribute his scholars, no parent his children, into two sets, the one all bad, the other all good. Through no group of human beings, whether assembled on an exchange, in a senate house, or at church, could we run such a line of demar-

cation. If from the direct view of life, we turn to see it as represented in the mirror of Art, we justly regard it as the greatest failure of genius and discernment in the dramatist, if he deals only with the extremes of brilliancy and blackness, and makes up his moral scenery of moonlight purity and red-torched pandæmonium. Even the believers and teachers of this doctrine feel it an uneasy and invidious thing to apply it; and when they have been touched by the generosity of an amiable sinner, or have lost money by the keenness of a distinguished saint, their feelings contradict the conception, and it flies before the living face of men. How is it possible, that to the eye of the all-seeing God the world should represent itself under an aspect and distribution, which, with all the distorting help of narrow-hearted exclusiveness, even the coarsest human perception finds untenable?

Yet, gross as this classification appears, it is not always with the rude and dull of discernment that it finds acceptance. Not only has it been embodied in the theology of almost every Christian Church, but it has been embraced with personal and passionate conviction by the greatest and most powerful minds of Christendom; and has sunk so deep into the ultimate seats of their earnestness, as to constitute the very centre of gravity to their belief. Without some profound line of consciousness as its axis of rotation, their religion could not always have borne upon its surface, and spread

upon the universe beyond, these contrasted hemispheres of light and darkness. No grandeur of poetic gift, no completeness of philosophic culture, no practical contact with affairs, has sufficed to lift men of devout soul above this wonderful belief. Dante not only paints his *Inferno*, but peoples it with men whom he had addressed by name, and seen in the streets of Italian cities. Milton musters the angelic as well as the human hosts, under the opposite banners of friends and enemies of God. St. Augustine, melted by the words of Ambrose into burning tears, feels himself snatched from the grasp of fiends, and enabled, by free surrender of the will, to join the ranks of the redeemed. Pascal exhausts the marvellous resources of his thought to fix intensely on men's minds the sense of their mingled misery and grandeur; a misery that sweeps all before it, so long as it is stayed by nothing but the poor resistance of nature; a grandeur that, once conferred by the converting hand of God, rules where it only served before. Nor can any critic blind us to the fact, that the apostle Paul did not look upon the moral spectacle of the world as a scene of infinite gradation; but in his thought threw the net of salvation over a circle of varied contents but definite boundary, and left all beyond in the open ocean of destruction. Nay, a diviner eye than his gazed on no dissimilar picture; and saw the types and species of souls, not scattered and various like the countless forms of life upon the

fields and hills, but divided, the sheep from the goats, the one on the right hand and the other on the left, of the Judge of all. Nor does the paradox end here. Beyond the limits of Christianity itself, the tendency remains the same : wherever, as in Plato,—the greatest thinker of antiquity,—you encounter a mind of singular depth and moral insight, there you will find the faith that, beneath all the disguises and plausibilities of the world, a race of divine souls, few and faithful, is securely preparing for holier conditions, amid a multitude of hopeless self-idolaters, reserved for fearful discipline or endless retribution. Surely there must be some momentous cause of this curious phenomenon ; that the minds on the confines and within the light of inspiration, declare for the faith most offensive to the common understanding. I believe it to depend entirely on the difference there is between the outside and the inside view of moral good and evil. The one is given by observation ; the other by reflection. The one is what we seem to see ; the other, what we really feel. The one is the critical judgment of sin and goodness, realized and produced ; the other, the interpretation of them in the living process of creation. The one belongs to the natural history of life ; the other to its religion.

We study the characters of other men as we do the laws and forces of physical nature, either in order to shape our course by reference to them, or merely to

satisfy the mental appetite for truth of fact. In either instance, whether our purpose be action or knowledge, the operation is not moral, but simply intellectual ;—to apprehend what men are, without any regard to how they became so. They are considered simply as objects in nature with which we have concern ; whose attitude accordingly we watch through various experiments, and the tendency of whose forces we try to ascertain. In this view it is a matter of indifference, whether men were originally made such as we find them, or have made themselves so. What is given in their nature, and what has been created or fostered by their own will are both contemplated in one indiscriminate mass ; and our judgment is formed upon the aggregate whole. We only want to discover how we are to deal with them in the present, and what we have to expect from them in the future ; and in this relation it is no concern of ours to discriminate between the primitive roots and the voluntary growths of their character. This however is precisely the point on which all *moral* estimate of them exclusively hinges ; and which makes all the difference between the mere appreciations of science and the higher judgments of conscience, between the faculty which interprets what is, and that which legislates for what ought to be. Knowledge has its eye ever on the future, conscience on the past ; the one reckons up its expected gains, the other its lost opportunities ; the one is intent upon realities that will be,



the other on idealities that *might have been*. It is the characteristic distinction between God's view of the characters of men and ours, that while we observe only the result in the gross and notice what they have become, he can disengage their work from his, trace in the texture the original threads of natural disposition and follow the pattern which the diligence of the will has wrought upon them. In proportion as we miss this divine insight, our keenest observation will show us only the mental conditions, and not at all the moral characters of men. Unless I know my brother's temptations, how can I speak fitly of his triumph or his fall? The resistance that threatens to overwhelm him, the divine aid that comes to put vigour into his arm and freshness into his heart, are viewless conditions, hid in the recesses of his soul; yet on these it may depend, whether in the same external action he be a traitor or a hero. A timid child, in whom cruel treatment or mere want of love has put a trembling fluttering heart, may do a nobler thing in saying some unnoticed word of truth, than the martyr in whom the native or divinely kindled fires of enthusiasm within balance and neutralize the flames feeding on the flesh. The sweet and genial temper that may freely live in the open air of one mind, cannot range through another till angry passions have been imprisoned out of the way under some twenty atmospheres of resolve and then condensed in sleep. Even the saintly spirit that

finds quick access to God, and never leaves his conscious presence long, that feels nothing visible half so real as the invisible, and before which nature and the faces of men are but the thin gauze hung before the divine thought within, often seems, like an angel's lot that has fallen upon the human earth, to come as the direct gift of heaven, and be in the nature rather than in the character. There is indeed no attribute of goodness placed beyond the reach, or contributed without the action, of any human will: fidelity may achieve, and without fidelity we must forfeit, all. But the proportions between what is given and what is to be earned are of infinite variety: there is nothing high, there is nothing low, which does not approach, in some instances, to mere endowment, in others to pure self-creation; and so dimly distinguishable by us are they to whom much is given, that neither can we recognise those of whom much will be required.

What then can we learn from the historical or external study of our kind? That men exist with infinite variety of spiritual feature, so mingling their lineaments and invisibly melting away their shades, as to defy the resources of a narrow classification. But that the characters, as objects of moral judgment, are as various as the *men*, observation gives us not the slightest reason to believe. We know indeed quite positively that there is no constant ratio between the two orders of differ-

ences ; and that of two minds akin in result, one may be chiefly involuntary nature, the other, all voluntary habit ; the one, like the wild flower in its native fields ; the other, like the same kind, painfully trained in a foreign clime, with elaborated soil and artificial heats. What is true of one case, is true of all. The apparent gradations of character may be all resolvable into varieties in the problem originally set by nature ; and in the phenomena which we observe there is nothing to decide on the relative merits of men : they may all deserve the very same ; or their just award may be twofold, wide apart as the “ kingdom of our Father ” from the outer darkness of weeping and wailing. Thus we may understand, how religious men do not feel their classification contradicted by the facts of the world. The marks on which judicial insight fixes its gaze are illegible, they think, save to the eye of God. The world is to them a spiritual masquerade ; where the jewelled cloak may hang upon the shoulders of a bankrupt, and the rags of beggary conceal a prince. Hence their lofty moderation, their somewhat cold and impassive demeanour towards human life. They neither trust, nor wholly distrust the moral appearances of things ; for the heart is deeper than they can read. They dare not yield their full affection to any being, lest he prove a foreigner and no citizen of heaven. Yet they know themselves in the presence of many a person, could they but discern him, worthy of eternal

affection and regarded already with the complacency of God. In their indifference to external symptoms, they tend even to go in contradiction to them; to suspect a snare in the sound look of decent habits and happy dispositions; to cling to hope and believe in latent good, where outwardly appear only the wreck of passion and the deformity of guilt. And so they are apt to move through life without admiration and without despair for men; with no eager expenditure of love, but with a store of deep affections in reserve; with the wealth and intensity of their souls delivered over to nothing actual, but sedulously enlarged and deepened for objects invisible and waiting to be revealed.

While the doctrine of a heaven and a hell, with a corresponding classification of mankind, is thus not contradicted by outward observation, its real seat and strength lie in the inward reflection upon ourselves and the nature of the right and wrong we do. The moment we turn to question our own hearts, and judge, "not by the seeing of the eye," but by the secret oracle of conscience, all notion of the infinite gradations of character, and of our own freedom from anything very bad or very good, entirely disappears: as we gaze, the neutral shade divides in the midst, and gathers itself at either end into the white light of heaven and the blackness of the gulf. In the moment of temptation, what is the scene really enacted within us? Is it not invariably a controversy,—a struggle,—between two

competing passions for occupancy of our will?—passions, between which it is ours to decide, and of which we know the one to be nobler, and the other relatively base? When, as Peter stood with the servants at the fire, the first cock-crowing smote upon his heart and told him the thing which he had done, what was the sad history which he read as he looked in? Would he not interpret it thus?—"What have I done? Soul of the rock become weak as water! the deepest love I have, love to the purest of beings,—love backed by all the claims of Truth,—I have put away, to give myself up to *Fear*, fear for these poor shivering limbs, fear of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do!" Will Peter then think simply that he has done rather amiss, and that it is a pity he was so taken off his guard?—or, that he is a wretch, who has done the *worst possible* to him?—for how can a man do more than *the very wickedest thing that comes before his choice at the time*? You indeed who stand by and look on, may imagine to yourself impulses still more depraved to which, had he been some other man, he might have yielded; but if these were never present to him, if they never came into the field of his temptation, what are they to him? They are wholly foreign to his problem; in the solution of which he could sink no lower than to accept the proposals of Satan and decline the answer of God. What consolation would it have brought to the apostle's bitter tears, to tell

him, that more shocking things might be imagined,—that if (for instance) he had gone up to his Master and assassinated him, *that* would have been worse? The suggestion would be but an insult to his remorse; and would operate like the voice of those foolish and heartless comforters, who remind you, as you smart under one sorrow, that you might have had two, and that, though the blessing folded to your bosom has been torn away, another, sitting in the chair beside you, yet remains. Peter would reply, “Go to, thou fool and blind; Satan gave me the lie to tell; but he put no murderer’s dagger in my hand; what more then could I do for him than I have done?”

This case appears to me a fair example of all our moral history. In each single instance of temptation, we are solicited by two rival feelings among the many that may become springs of action in the soul. These two stand alone upon the stage; there may be others, some better, some worse; but they are not *there*, nor does just that crisis and movement of the piece give room for their appearing. Appealed to by the actual competitors for our will, we well know which is the higher, expressing the will of God; and which the lower, representing his aversion. There is no third thing present; and the difference between the two is all that there can be: it is something infinite, being beyond all *quantity*, and giving an antithesis of *quality*, contrasted as beauty with horror, as the zenith with the

nadir, as the smile of heaven with the frown. There is then no *second best* in Duty; and the remorse which makes us feel, when we have fallen, as traitors and accursed, flying from the tempestuous face of God, reports to us an awful truth: had we been devils, we could have done no worse; we did the whole evil we were bid to do. Did then the retribution of the future follow instantly upon each single probation, did we simply lapse in our trial and then die, the punishment could be nothing but absolute and unmixed; no opening have we given for anything else; we have thrown away our only chance, and are simply and utterly undone. And thus are the shadows of judgment thrown, as rayless darkness direct from the light,—and surely the prophetic and forecasting light—of our own minds.

We are judged, however, it will be said, not by a single trial, but by the aggregate result of life; and by the mixed character which comes out of our various defeats and conquests. True; and *if* we can say, that the will which often unworthily succumbs, often also arms itself to victory, this appeal to a doctrine of moral averages will be important. For my own part, I feel but little faith in it. In the beginning of life's responsibilities, when the trust is administered by a mind yet fresh and unconfirmed, there may be for a time doubtful alternations of triumphant resolve and unworthy retreat, and the hosts of light and darkness may sway to and fro and waver in the fight. But experience discounte-

nances the belief that this will continue so indefinitely. The law of habit soon tells upon the moral judgment, no less than upon the external acts ; and the same mind is usually found to decide after a while in one very predominant direction ; so that, after all, the brief vacillation will not tell largely on the result, or the whole of life materially alter the complexion of the single case. Could we therefore read the hearts of men, we should perhaps be startled to find in how many life is throughout one continued flight and evasion, a perpetual lapse, an unarrested sin ; while in others, it is all a noble contest, an unconquerable fidelity, a race in which the panting breast and bleeding feet persuade to no despair. To the eye of God, then, as to that of the most saintly of his servants, this scene may present, more than we suppose, the contrast of the faithful and the unfaithful, the heirs of light and the reserved for judgment. It can scarcely be that there is not *something* in the great world to come corresponding to the immeasurable difference which reveals itself in our own forecasting souls between holiness and guilt.

By what methods this felt difference will however declare and justify itself, it were vain to surmise ; and least of all can we lay any stress on the mythological pictures to which, in the intensity of their spiritual convictions, prophetic men have had recourse as symbols of the truth they would convey, and the interval they desired to mark. Whether it be Plato's roaring shaft, with its



thorny sides and police of fiends, through which the dead must pass, or Christ's undying worm and unquenchable fire, it were childish to take these images for more than solemn hints of an undefinable reality, or to imagine that, by dissipating them, you get rid of the penalties of sin. But are these penalties, I shall perhaps be asked, anything more than the "natural consequences" of the evil will,—the discord of the passions, the gnawing of the selfish mind, the sinking down upon the lower levels of character? Thus far, the life that now is has its retributory character; may not the life that is to come simply continue this provision? Why should the intervention of Death make a difference? the personal nature which passes through it being the same before and after, is it not enough that it should work out its history?

Nothing can be more just than the stress which such an objector lays on the continuity of the moral nature through its transitions of being, and on the indefinite development hereafter of its provisions for self-chastisement and self-restoration. But when these internal resources of the mind's own constitution have been all used up, are the awards of justice accurately administered, and is it true that the conscience recompenses every man according to his works? On the contrary, its failure to do so prompts the very demand of our hearts for a life that shall redress the wrong, and visit the successful sins, and fulfil the broken promises of

the present. It is because judgment does not here advance *pari passu* with probation, and yet is evidently meant to overtake it, that there opens before us a Hereafter in which the missing retribution shall be made good, and the treatment of men be harmonized with the righteousness of God. It belongs therefore to the essential idea of the future life, that it shall have a judicial character transcending and completing the present, and containing what would *not* ensue, but for the intervention of death.

These new consequences of sin, whatever they be, will have no less right to be called "natural" than those with which we are familiar; for all results which God ordains by rule enter his order of nature, though it be in a province unexplored by us. So far as our nature remains the same, they will not supersede, they will take up and include, the penalties which it carries now: but why should it be a thing doubtful, that they will go further and add more? They depend, not on our inward nature only, but also on its external environment; and Death, interpret it as you may, is at least a change of scene, a dropped organism, an entrance upon fresh conditions of being. In migrating into these, the soul, notwithstanding its identity, cannot fail to have new experiences; and that they should afford scope for a more remorseful self-insight and a less evitable retribution, is in harmony with every reasonable vaticination. The grand defect of the

“natural consequences” of pravity in this life is that, being in great measure unconsciously incurred, they do not operate as punishments and awaken no shame of demerit ; the gradual blunting of moral sensibility, the fading of noble enthusiasms, the frosting over of generous affections, the deterioration and decay of the will, which appal and sadden the observers, are unfelt by the degenerate himself ; and his loss, though little less than infinite, is in the form of unknown privation, not of redeeming pain. It is of the essence of guilty declension to administer its own anæsthetics ; and the insufficiency of the penal hurt incurred under them is recognised by human law ; which, on that very account, steps in with its supplementary store of positive inflictions, to turn the unconscious into conscious sin and sorrow. The additional consequences which are thus appended to transgression are still quite “natural” ; they flow as spontaneously from the offended moral sentiments of other men, as contrition from the conscience of the criminal himself. And if the grieved justice of God hereafter brings about any corresponding penal change in the sinner’s lot, it no less truly belongs to the natural order of his universe than the sequence of waking upon sleep or of compassion upon disaster. In retribution intensified far beyond the limits of our present outward experience, and answering more nearly to our inward moral discernment, there is nothing whatever at variance with the unswerving persistency of law.

And surely the transition of Death is large enough to open free play for many a penalty that has remained only potential here. When body, mind, society, and scene have all been changed, the old resources for slighting contrition and evading the misery of wrong may well have come to an end, and left the soul exposed to the lightnings that have long hung over it. Have I so dwelt in my "earthly tenement" as to own it as master of my inward life, and make it the depositary of all the desires and habits to which I chiefly cling? What then becomes of me,—into what desolation do I fall,—when they thirst and rage under conditions that deny them scope? Have I shut myself in some nest of selfishness, and become the willing dupe of vain excuse for neglected duty, and stifled compassion, and omitted sacrifice? Then, to have the perception burst upon me of the confusion, the tears, the sins that I have caused, to meet the reproaches of those whom I have irreparably wronged, and to see, when it is too late, all that I might have been and done,—what is this but to have the wounded spirit which none can bear? Have I been content with moving on the low levels of gain and ease and barren display, and never felt the higher springs of thought and wonder and devotion? What then but shame and weariness await me in a society utterly alien to all that I know and can admire? What share can I have in the joy of brighter spirits on mingling with the august company of the wise, the

heroic, the saintly, of every age? What solitude could be more awful than the conscious estrangement of the trivial soul in such a throng?

For *the form* in which this ancient faith,—of the immeasurable difference between guilt and goodness,—has been embodied, I do not plead. To say that the two are *eternally* separate, and that there is no transit from the one to the other, is an hyperbole of enthusiasm, which even contradicts the very moral law it is intended to emphasize: for unless it is possible for character to rise and fall and so change places, the world is under Fate instead of Righteousness. We cannot translate an intense contrast of *quality* into any *quantitative* infinitude. Time and guilt are incommensurable things; and no cycles of the one can be fitted to the relations of the other. But the language which seems to do so springs from a deep insight, and symbolizes a solemn truth; that the retributions of God are very awful; that they are not to be judged by our skill in putting them off or blindfolding ourselves to them; that their true interpretation is to be sought in our own unperverted remorse; that a really holy mind, in its most sunny hours of trust, will never quite forget their shadow; and that whilst there is always “forgiveness with God,” it is “that he may be feared.”

## XI.

### Faith the Deliverance from Fear.

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ISAIAH li. 12, 13.

“I, even I, am he that comforteth you ; who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass ; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ?”

EVIL of every kind, being familiar to us as an *object* of apprehension, appears to be external to ourselves. And yet it is invested with the greater part of its severity by the mind : it acts upon us by the ideas it awakens, the affections it wounds, the aspirations it disappoints. If its outward pressure were all, and it dealt with us as beings of sense alone, it would lose most of its poignancy and retain only its momentary power. The sufferings of human life, which throw a tint of sorrow into every philosophy, and from which so large a portion of our activity is but an effort to escape, would dwindle down into a few animal pangs, extorting from the patient a passing moan, but visiting the observer with no permanent perplexity. The self-conscious nature of man extends his being every way, and swells the pointed

moment into a full-orbed world ; and the pain which to the inferior creatures is but a hard, irresolvable nucleus, becomes surrounded in him with a burning atmosphere of thought, whose fervour and flashing hide the centre that holds and shapes it. It is our higher nature that creates immeasurably the greater part of the ills which we endure : they are ideal, not sensible : and it is the privilege of reason to have tears instead of groans ; of love to know grief instead of pain ; of conscience to replace uneasiness with remorse. Every faculty added introduces new desires : every desire entails another order of possible disappointments ; and every disappointment contributes a fresh element of evil to the present, and anxiety as to the future. As the compass of our being widens, the range of Fear extends. Penury, disgrace, bereavement, guilt, are evils which we must be human in order to feel ; and it is the penalty of our nobleness, not only to be weighed down by their occasional burthen, but to be perpetually haunted by the phantom of their approach.

Nevertheless, our special endowments are not to be deplored as mere afflictions. They create undoubtedly the grand severities of life ; but they create yet grander consolations. They acquaint us with evil as something human ; but thereby carry us on to faith as something divine. They both lay us low on the earth in sorrow ; and lift us to the heaven that transcends it : they fill our atmosphere with the sad rain-drops ; and send

athwart them the sunny glory which they bend into the curve of promise, and spread into the hues of hope. At the side of every suffering by which God has dignified our nature he has set a belief to assuage it, to consecrate it, to turn it from weakness and confusion into strength and wisdom. The Reason which makes us deplore vicissitude and anticipate decay, enables us to discern the Eternal, and feel assured of the perpetuity of good. The Affections which render the separations of mortality so sad, open our eyes to the immortal worth and sanctity of a human Spirit, and reduce death to the rank of a temporary illusion. The Conscience which disturbs us with the shadow of guilt, directs our eye to the pure light that casts it; and the downcast look at our own sinful form sustains the aspiring memory of a heaven clear and clean. Thus the powers that deepen terribly the sense of ill, exalt gloriously the faith in good: they cast us into the midst of sorrow; but they throw us into the embrace of God. Faith is allowed us as the appointed antagonist of Fear; and none are so ready with the true courage and calmness of a man, as those whose trust is in One that is higher than man.

The truly religious man is, in fact, incapable of fear. Not that he has any diminished expectation of the evils incident to the human lot. He looks for no exemption from them, and would be the last to claim it. He loves to share the common heritage, and would feel a special



immunity to be a personal alienation. The particular Providences which please the piety of a narrow mind and a rude age offend his larger soul : a God whom he could have all to himself would cease to be the object of his worship ; and a Heaven that would bend itself to his wish would be to him a heaven no more. To be invulnerable to the arrow that flieth by night, while others drop on the dark ground ; to be wrapped in an ambrosial cloud amid the pestilence that walketh at noon-day ; to bear a charmed life, and see the shadow go back upon the dial on his account ; to have the sunshine measured for his corn, and the days of early and latter rain counted for his meadow-grass ; to find the natural edge of temptation blunted for his sake, and fiends warned off without vigilance of his ;—all this he would think it shameful to desire and impious to expect,—treachery to the fraternal heart of humanity, and estrangement from the filial spirit of devotion. He asks no pledges from Providence ; nor proposes to sell his confidence for a consideration. When sickness comes, he expects what the physician prophesies ; when dangers impend, what reason foresees ; when the tempter assails, what resolution armed with prayer may hope to achieve. While his fears are infinitely less than other men's, his anticipations are the same.

Nor can we say that his courage is due to any superior *knowledge*. While others are trembling amid the contingencies of life, he is not let into the secret, and

permitted to see the clouds disperse. From him as from others the reasons and the results of things are hid : his explanations and his predictions are no wiser than his brother's. Indeed, were his foresight ever so good, it would do nothing to deliver him from the thralldom of terror. Vain is the frequent boast of Science, that it puts to flight the troop of fears that beset the ways of men, and chill the imagination with the stroke of their spectre wing ; and that, as it takes the awful frown out of the eclipse, and puts on it a plain natural face, so does it everywhere introduce tranquillity into life, and expel every scaring figure from its presence. Never was there pretension more open to the charge of blinding pride. True, Science dissipates false alarms ; but it also creates true ones. It removes the terror from the aspect of the stars ; but it announces the tornado speeding up beneath summer skies. It expels the demons of the cavern or the grove ; but it tells of malaria brooding over fertile fields, and shrouding the gay and heaving sea. It laughs away the doom from the life of child or maid bewitched ; but it interprets with a sigh the transparency upon the brow, and the fair hectic on the cheek. It changes the direction, rather than lessens the amount, of fear ; and, while the great decrees of nature remain what they are, however we may distribute its items of suffering and alarm, the aggregate will not be materially changed. Religion then does not affect to know more than others :

it cannot solve all mysteries and remove all doubts. It only can be content, if need be, without knowing ; can make peace with a mystery, and let a doubt sleep beneath its tent. It can bear to be in the dark ; to remain alone in the night air, and beneath the stars ; and instead of rushing from the hour with hurried foot-fall and mocking lamp, to subside into it with quiet thought and holy prayer.

Religion then does not remove fear by diminishing the expectation, or by increasing the knowledge of evil. It simply enables the mind to *transcend* evil, by the power of trust ; and this, though it may seem a less, is in truth a far greater and more blessed thing ; not a melancholy makeshift under irremediable doubt ; but a joy beyond all philosophic certainties. Seeing well is a smaller matter than believing wisely ; the one being the attribute of the clear eye and the cold intellect ; the other of the large thought and the deep heart. Knowledge is understanding by Sense ; faith is understanding by Love ; and while the one can only give us assurance of what *is*, the other gives assurance of what *must be* : the one declares the transitory facts, the other interprets the eternal necessities, of the universe : the one scans and construes the successive lines, the other penetrates the scope and spirit, of the divine Epic of Creation. It is not wonderful that the passing incidents of joy, suspense, despair, carry at once a fainter agitation and a deeper beauty to the soul on which they fall,

not with the piercing of a single note, but with the blending of a harmony. And so is it a calmer thing to apprehend what God is always thinking, than to discern what he is now doing; to repose upon his meaning everywhere, than to perceive his action at a solitary point. It is through escape from tyrannising impressions of the instant, that the devout man acquires his peculiar serenity. Rising and sinking, not less than others, with the wave that sweeps beneath him, he remembers the mighty tide that bears the billows and himself, and knows the steady wind by which he flies. He is possessed of the only power that can dissipate the intensity of the moment,—the ineffaceable picture of order, beauty, goodness, as the eternal basis of everything,—the reality of all appearance,—the clear sky that, behind the wild tempest of winter or the cloud-isles of the summer eve, holds its patient back-ground and retains the stars. This fixed thought it is, that, in its calm expanse, is able to swallow up sensation. It lays a quiet hand, like the healing touch of Christ, upon the quivering nerves; and fixes the trembling features by giving them an uplifted look, as if upon the cross. The very same sense of man's relative position, of the diminutive place assigned him in a stupendous system, which in the unconsecrated reason excites the idea of human insignificance, becomes in the heart of faith the consciousness of human protectedness; and the moment of helpless distraction to the one, brings the other to lie

still and say, "Now he takes me to his sole care." How often must the great forces of nature terrify one who looks them in the face as rude giants without a trace of sanctity; the poisoned air, the bolted storm, the disease of lingering agony! but he who regards them but as the natural energies of God, feels all the real serenity that hides itself behind the seeming confusion, and mingles with the everlasting will. Who else could bear the last extremity of outward suffering?—could meet, without loss of inward dignity, a call to lonely death? When, for instance, the ship has struck and broken up, and its human shriek has gurgled away into the relentless splash of waters; and a single voyager, by some marvel of escape, finds himself adrift in a boat alone; when the night settles down upon him and shuts him in between the darkness above and the black deep below; when the bursting wind and the slanting hail and the plunging waves show that he is but reserved from the common fate to perish deliberately and in the private wilds of nature: what, think you, has been the history of his thought in such an hour? There may be many who might await the moment with outward steadfastness; but only one, I suppose, who would sit there with a real light of inward calm;—namely, he to whom that solitude was not absolute; who could converse with a Presence behind the elements, and listen to a voice other than the wind's; who knew the night to be but a seeming darkness, and, though the stars were blotted

out, felt the pure eyes of the Infinite upon him ; who could welcome the terror, not as the end, but as a beginning, the pangs of an everlasting birth. Such a one is but flung by the wildest delirium of nature into the closer embrace of the eternal God.

But how would the scene be changed, if the raging elements could tell him that his faith was baseless, and that their fury alone was real ! Such revelation would indeed be impossible, for negation has no words at its command and cannot declare its own void. But if the lightnings could write upon the clouds " We have no God, thou alone art divine," into what ultimate horror would this dismal apotheosis plunge him ! *He*, divine ? drenched with the surge, swung as a log, battered by the storm, and only waiting for the breaker that shall curve over and engulf him ! No providence in heaven ! No life in death ! O fatal preeminence in such a world ; chief of an anarchy ; pilot of a hopeless wreck ! The flash of such news would reverse the whole inward climate of his soul, from the serene light of an infinite trust to the sullen lowering of the last despair.

But let us return into our own God's world, and dissipate this hopeless dream in the sheltered valleys and glad sunshine of his Providence. As trust in Divine Order suppresses physical fear, so does faith in Eternal Justice prevent moral fear. The disciple that knows in whom he has believed, is not afraid before falsehood and wrong, though he seem to stand alone :

you cannot pale his cheek by the uproar of passion ; and his face is set and his brow serene against the defiance of evil interest. What though the whole city turns into the theatre, and shouts for two hours and more, " Great is Diana of the Ephesians ! " Did she not remain all the while neither great nor little, but just nothing at all ? and did not Paul know that, by and by, when those people were seen only as a gaping rabble, and she had been construed back into moonshine, his truth would live, and consecrate the world that now denied it voice ? The coercion of the law, and the tumult of the people, spend themselves in vain against the devout sense of right. You may barricade the streets with devils ; but Luther goes to Worms. You may pour over Bohemia the damps of German philosophy and the chill of imperial displeasure ; but the fire of reformation will burn the more, and though it consume the prophets, will glorify the faith. You may deliver a Thomas More from the bench in Chancery to the gaoler of the Tower : you may have his head, but not his voice against a pure and noble queen. The quaint George Fox may be thrust with hootings into the county court ; but " with the utmost efforts of constable and judge, you cannot so much as remove his hat." To these men's eye there is revealed a higher court and an august Judge, before whom they stand with uncovered soul, and who is already hearing their appeal. The verdict will be given in its season. The tongue of

time and truth will not be for ever dumb. What matter the indignities and scorns that pretend to silence it? They are but as the dust that settles on the minster bell, or the flies that buzz around it: when the hour comes round, it will fling out its great and solemn tones, and scatter the levities, as with an earthquake, from its sides. This it is that renders the heart of faith so steadfast to endure, and turns the peaceful into men of contention. You cannot overcast their spirit: its atmosphere will not hold your angry clouds: fast as you roll their stormy shadows on, the fervours of a divine love will dissolve them, and the sunshine will find a still transparent way. The boldness of these men is far removed from a brazen audacity: it is mingled with a strange gentleness: it seems not to be chosen by their will, but to lie on them as a necessity; and has the air not of rebellion but of obedience. They have been laid hold of by a higher spirit which hardens them against the fires of false anger, but melts them at the dropping of true tears. They will take the branding of their foreheads as if they were a marble image on which you cut your foolish name: but they are soft as a woman to the sobs of a brother's heart; and the great soul of pity steals through their ruggedness, like the sad red light of evening shot upwards, as from the earth, among the airy rocks. Nor should this combination really surprise us. It is only among those who live for their own ends, that the resolute are also the



men of forward front and metal heart. But here we have to do with a far different class; those who have forsworn their own ends, and taken God's; who retain no purposes to which the simplicity of true affection can be troublesome; who, standing loose from ease and reputation, are the freer to move whithersoever a manly truth and love may take them. The modest indeed are almost the last whom we should expect to be the timid: for timidity springs from the uneasy consciousness of self; modesty, from the spontaneous reverence for others; and while the one is the most artificial of moral infirmities, the other is the most natural of religious graces.

One case there is in which, it may be thought, Religion must rather introduce, than expel, the element of fear;—the case of *moral transgression*. And, no doubt, under that sad consciousness, we cannot, at first, but hang the head, and shrink before the terrible eye of Infinite Perfection, and feel so hurt by the very name of God, that we may try for a while even to forget it. But, after all, it is from ourselves, rather than from him, that we endeavour to fly. We are alarmed, not at what *he* is, but at what *we* are; nor do we doubt that he would take us back, were not we ashamed to go. But how again to lift a look to that pure and piercing gaze,—the more terrible in reproach, the more it is forgiving! Ask however the awe-struck sinner, in the moment of deepest shuddering, whether he would really desire that there were no God;—Ah

no ! not more than the returning prodigal could wish, as he drew nigh to the house, to find his father dead. It is the secret sense of an Almighty Justice that sustains those also that have most rebelled against it ; and spreads a granite basin of everlasting trust, to cradle even the wicked, heaving as the troubled sea that cannot rest. “ The Devils also believe and tremble ” ; but they would tremble more were there nothing to believe in. Their obdurate will may have little to hope ; but what would they not have to *fear*, if they had the universe to themselves ! How could they ever know the worst, when there no longer remained any Rule and Law, and there was no bound to the spread of conflagration and the encroachment of Chaos ? Even in the last retreats of despair, God is our rock, and our Faith the deliverance from Fear. Though he be the sinner’s terror, he is yet the sinner’s stay. Without him, the sweet openings of hope are for ever closed ; with him, there is nothing too good and blessed to be true. There is no night so drear and long that he is not its distant day-spring. There are no human creatures so forlorn, as not to feel that, if in his presence they must hide the face and shrink, in his absence they would wring the hands and be undone. Let every fearful soul take courage then ; in sorrow and sin seek the everlasting shelter ; and say “ Thou art my rock, in whom I trust ; my fortress ; of whom shall I be afraid ? ”

## XII.

### The darkened heart.



ROMANS i. 21.

“And their foolish heart was darkened.”

It is the favourite sentiment of the simple moralist that men are to be appreciated by their *works*. It is the habit and tendency of religion to appreciate them by their *faith*. The one insists on the actual realization, the other on the ideal essence, of the good and faithful life. Neither rule, taken by itself without correction from the other, is true to nature or to the spirit of Christ. If by “Works” you mean all that Christ intended when he said “by their *fruits* ye shall know them”; if you include the whole outward manifestation and natural expression of the mind; if you comprise, along with action, words and demeanour too, the rule is exactly just and true. In this sense men’s “*works*” stand opposed to their “*professions*”; and the maxim simply affirms that the general impression left upon us by the whole course of their sayings and silence, their doings and abstainings, is not to be set

aside by any special declaration which they may choose, —for a purpose,—to make about themselves. But if you mean by “Works,” the positive conduct only, in distinction from the language and deportment of a man’s unguarded nature ; if you would limit me to mere published symptoms, and forbid me to regard his feelings and beliefs ; if you would say, that, provided we get from him a certain practical rectitude, it is a matter of no moment from what state of mind it springs ; then the rule is not merely without support from the authority of Christ, but in direct contradiction to the primary notions of all religion whatsoever. It implies one of these two propositions ; either that religion is the same thing as morality, or, that if it be different, it adds nothing that is of the least consequence. To pronounce it the same, and make it consist of a conformity of the will to an imposed law, is to outrage the language of all nations and the consciousness of all times ; to make the soul of life of no account in comparison of its business, and present the external respectabilities as candidates for canonization. On the other hand, to declare it different is to own it greater ; for how must that difference be conceived ? As morality occupies the sphere of the will, Religion finds its place beyond and around the will, in the affections and desires which fill the penetralia of our nature, —which present us with every case for choice,—and create the very possibilities of duty and of guilt. The

truth is, we judge of men much more by their way of thinking, than by their way of acting; and this too, for the very reason that is urged against the justice of such a course,—viz. that action only is under their own control. It is under their control; and therefore may be assumed for a particular end, and be put forth, like their professions, for the purpose of impression. Thought, taste, and feeling are *not* under their control, and therefore tell a tale in which there can be no guile: they utter oracles clear to the spectator, hidden from the speaker in his trance; and reveal in its essence that of which action is but the ambiguous expression. Nor do we accuse ourselves of any injustice in this estimate of men by their free natural language. We should reproach ourselves with culpable prejudice, if we disliked a man for the colour of his hair, or the height of his stature: we suffer no compunction when the complexion of his sentiments and the tone of his imagination disgust us. The reason is this; that although both bodily and mental qualities are *now* alike involuntary, we assume that there was a time when the will, which could never command the body, might have otherwise disposed the mind: if its freshness and purity are gone, we take it as an evidence of opportunity slipped, and the sanctity of nature marred and corrupted. We follow the simple reasoning of old times, that “God hath made man upright; but he hath sought out many inventions.” In this, as in

most of our other natural judgments, I believe we are sustained by the fundamental principles of justice and sound philosophy. We cannot today think as we choose, admire as we choose, love as we choose; nor has our present state of mind ever been an object of direct and purposed adoption by us. Yet we have had a negative power over it: we might have prevented it: moment by moment, thought by thought, its direction could be turned, and its form modified;—as you cannot straighten the leaning tower, but might have squared the stones of which 'tis built;—and since we have let it grow, we cannot evade responsibility for its deformities.

Nothing perhaps so clearly exhibits the true contrast between morality and religion as the different relations they sustain to the *law of habit*. Habit is the grand hope of good morals, but the despair of deep religion; and while the one is engaged in cultivating it, the other lives only in resisting it. If the moralist, in urging his system of right action, can but give us motive enough to begin with, his hardest point is gained; the great fly-wheel of the will once set in motion, the second revolution will be promoted by the first, and the original impulse may suffer harmless decline. His maximum of force is needed only at the initial instant; and he is content, when the inertia of rest is overcome, to substitute the inertia of motion. Each province of life, as it yields to him, is submitted to a steady

mechanism, not only repressing the wild energies of nature, but more and more dispensing even with the good; and were it not that the domain is indefinite, and invites to enterprises ever new, the call for productive power might absolutely cease, and duty say "it is finished" when affection gives up the ghost. But this, the last triumph of morals, is the total discomfiture of religion; which abhors the sleepy rhythm of a rotatory nature; which protests against changing the seat of duty from the centre of soul to the muscles of the body;—like the Roman god who would not be torn from his ancient shrine, but while guarding all other boundaries, would insist on keeping his own. The devoutest moments of each man's life are those in which he first creates the rule which thenceforth he obeys; passes straight from deep passion into high action; and bridges over the awful chasm between the world of sacred thought and divine vision, and that of rugged and toilsome reality. Could the inspiration of these moments be prolonged and perpetuated, and living Resolve sustain its power, existence would be a constant prayer, and the incense of holy sacrifice would continually rise. So lofty a homage is not asked of us here, and so grand a privilege is denied. Yet religion has no other office than to be ever pressing towards it: it checks the spiritual encroachments of habit; compelling it to abide in the outer courts and busy streets of action, and guarding from its invasion the

inner temple of the mind ; to keep the eye intent and the soul awake, while opiates are applied to the extremities of life. The history of this struggle, sometimes glorious, is often sad ; and shows how rare is that happy balance of morals and of faith which harmonizes devout enthusiasm with practical wisdom.

Whoever has looked on a landscape with his head inverted knows with what a strange and visionary beauty it is invested : how softly the colours tinge the clouds, and the shadows sleep among the hills ; how deep and far the heavens, yet how near to the melting horizon of earth or sea ; how nature seems to look in her own glass, and paint her own picture, only without compelling the wind to sit, or stopping the motion of a wave. Hardly does it matter what is the scene on which we gaze through this glorifying charm : the level cornfields, the moor-top with its scudding sheep, the city streets with their moving groups, appear as dream-like images, apparitional representations of the coarse realities we long have known. Whence is this ? It is simply that we cheat custom of its stupefying power, and by a trick of variety make the eye confess its proper nature, and show us over again the forgotten visions of our younger days. It is not a lapse into illusion, but a momentary recovery of truth ; and could we apply a similar experiment to our whole mind, we should learn at once how far we have receded from the freshness of an unspoiled being. *All* our original per-



ceptions, whether of the sense or of the soul, are of this fair type ; and present to us a universe around, on which no film of opaque delusion yet has spread. To the child, not the faint zone of distance, with its blue hills and dim lines of wood and stream, is chiefly beautiful ; but the near world in which he is, the space which presses up upon his very heart. The divine form of life coalesces with the shape of neighbouring things ; and the crown of glory sits upon the head, not of unapproachable angels, but of the dear humanities at home. All our natural powers, however far they wander in the end, find their earliest exercise close at hand. Affection, complaining of no satiety, is long content with objects present every hour ; filling the day with happy work, and chasing the fears of night with trustful dreams. Pity, unrebuked as yet by fastidious experience, resorts to no fictitious world ; but springs to the immediate suffering, and bends over the sorrow at its feet : to soothe the parent's cares or wipe an infant's tears ; to help the widowed neighbour in her struggle or the old man as his strength decays ; are offices not too dull to engage the spirit of a fresh compassion. Conscience too does not go out to learn its skill by foreign travel, but has its early work brought to it on the spot. Critical and observant as it may become, a wandering censor of the deeds of others, it is not so at first. It breaks its shell in the home nest. It springs up from reflection on our own acts,—from

the strife of conflicting impulses,—the consciousness of mean surrender or of unbroken strength. And it has long a function solemn enough in guarding the sanctity of the personal life ; in holding off the spectres of guilt that are ever hovering around ; and preventing that infinite lapse, the thought of which appears sometimes to put an anxious look upon the very face of God. Nor does the child's *admiration* need to make excursions for its content. Living friends afford it themes for wonder deep enough ; and as he lifts his eye to the various circle, wisdom, beauty, goodness, strength, meet him and draw forth his secret aspiration. Everywhere we may notice the same feature. Love, Reverence, Duty, issue from the soul's own centre ; irradiate the circumference immediately around ; and over it all spread the feeling of a sacred presence, a heavenly light, which would make another world a needless thing, could we realize the seeming possibilities of this.

Now this glorified circle of our early life is precisely the dull patch of our maturity. Over its sunny grass a shadow creeps from the leaden clouds of commonplace. Except with souls of rare fidelity, the daily duty sadly flattens ; the constant faces tire ; the ready opportunity looks poor ; the persons once deemed great are found to be too like ourselves. We smile now at our young enthusiasm ; and plainly discover how merely earthly are the things that lay within its range.

They stand before us, like the painted and gorgeous player, washed sallow and stripped to his plain clothes ; who pays the penalty of every faded pageant, and can scarce excite in us the common human interest. Yet the reverential light of our young days cannot undergo extinction thus. It is intercepted, but not quenched. The black cloud that hides the Sun's full face, does but compel his rays to overflow its edge, and carry a slant and crimsoned glory down on distant fields. In like manner, the ideal lustre driven from the near ground of our first view, does but retreat to a zone that lies beyond. If domestic things grow weary, to the larger mind there is a widening world beyond, on whose traceless horizon the receding beauty yet may rest. Other lands and better times may deserve the fervour which were wasted else. Foreign oppression, and ancient worthies, the errors of another sect, the sins of another hemisphere may touch the zeal that faints away from every nearer work. And so it comes to pass, that the religion of grown men flies off from the immediate neighbourhood, and settles on the outer circle of the mental view. British compassion, tired of vulgar pauperism and Celtic beggary at home, is freshened up by the imaginative sight of slavery abroad : while American pity, insensible to the cruel prejudice of colour prevailing on the spot, looks with generous indignation on the rags of Irish wretchedness. Good quiet men, who never looked on blood, or studied so fierce a thing as

the history of nations, are shocked to think of the miseries of war; and by simply describing them, produce a peaceful zeal which the actual sight and close knowledge of them have always failed to teach. Blind to the evils that are ever near, we wring our hands at those which hover round our horizon, and beseech us with dumb looks to come over and help them: so that the maximum of reforming force would be accumulated in the world, if each man were to be "his brother's keeper," and pity and justice worked with long arm across half the globe. Only, our zeal in that case has to labour greatly in the dark: seeing indeed the heart and essence of a wrong; but wanting in that close and practical knowledge, that insight into its details, that fair human allowance for its agents as well as sorrow for its victims, without which the evil spirit, though driven from place to place, is not cast out from the world's great heart. Thus, where practice is easiest, perception grows most dull; and the vision is all alive, where action is impossible. Conscience, as well as compassion, falls into the delusion. Once so tender and earnest, so silent with an inward worship, so vigilant with holy and loving fear, it becomes critical and exacting; substitutes the fastidiousness of taste for the inspiration of beauty, and walks through the show-galleries of life with the voluble tongue of the connoisseur instead of shaping forth in the obscurer chambers the musings of devout genius. And so blindness

happens in part to Israel : the lights of the world prove hollow, like flame, which can never burn at its own heart ; and the eye, so quick of outward apprehension, does not notice how the inward visions, so divinely fair, have paled away and disappeared. How often do the Censors of mankind, the pious prophets of woe, stalk about in astounding self-ignorance : testifying against one sin, warnings against many ! and how sad the spectacle, when the sweet singers of humanity, from whose many-stringed souls flow forth the various melodies to which our grief and joy, our thought and aspiration, yield the dear response, hear not the discords of their own nature, but require the homely skill of some Nathan the prophet, ere they can be made conscious of the spirit out of tune, and be struck down by the words, "Thou art the man." The same tendency drives veneration also to a distance. The men of our own age and neighbourhood, by merely walking in our streets, and sitting at our tables, cease to be revered ; and admiration flits away to the heroes and the saints of history, the sages and the martyrs of less familiar lands. That there should be any real, live goodness in the next house seems to be a thing which men find it impossible to believe : how could the father be a tradesman ? and the brothers and sisters, are they not all with us ? And so men cry out for a *sign* : but no sign shall be given, except to them that know the voice of a divine wisdom when they hear it,

and discern the traces of a true sanctity when they behold it.

Now this state of mind, in which all faith and love retreat into the horizon, and an outlying band of religious light embraces a field of dull and vulgar life, is unhappily not permanently tenable. The same tendency which has driven the illumination thus far must drive it further, and send it wholly off into infinite vacancy, to be swallowed up in night. There is a palpable inconsistency in the belief, which maintains the reality of divine things in the distance, yet denies it close at hand. What reason is there to suppose that old historic men were more ideal than the people that are living now? They certainly walked the roads as we do: they were thirsty and drank: they were sleepy and slept: they married and were given in marriage: and why should we think them like the angels in heaven? The Cynic's common sense is quick to perceive this; and when once you have allowed your actual and your ideal to part company, and your devotion to travel far away, he will press upon its retreat with irresistible effect, and defy you to find the zone which will bring you to God and heaven. You have but this alternative; you must go through with him to his negation; or, you must retrace your way to the first childlike mind. You must draw back the old sacredness, till it comes nearer and nearer and touches with its thrill your central heart: you must shed the holy

light on the familiar ground again, and see that the very grass shines with a sunset gold beneath your feet. Say not that this is to resign ourselves to a vain romance. On the contrary, it is an escape from the only state of mind which is really liable to this charge, into the only one which is exempt from it. He is the true victim of romance, who has two worlds to live in, instead of one,—a poetic and an actual ; who keeps these entirely apart, the one for entertainment, the other for practice ; who spends his time alternately in each, as in a state of double and successive consciousness ; who can by no means bridge them together, but feels them separated by a chasm infinite and impassable ; and who presents therefore all the inconsistencies of an unharmonized and contradictory nature, which could be described, when he is dead, only by a two-fold biography. And *his* life is free from these false and changing colourings, who discerns a constant and steady sacredness over *all* his path ; whose God is near as well as far ; who feels in this great universe, not a remote heaven divided from the sad pressure of the near earth, but one single world, whose upper or lower abodes the true spirit may tenant with equal repose and trust ; who finds it all a “kingdom of heaven” ; and receives that kingdom as a little child.

### XIII.

His eye seeth ebery precious thing.



JOB xxviii. 10.

“His eye seeth every precious thing.”

WHETHER there is more to be amazed at in the conquests of human knowledge or in the extent of human ignorance, it is difficult to say. In different moods, and under the application of different tests, there is room for astonishment in each. Tried by the standard of feebler and darker times, the achievements of our age may well appear like the magic of a fairy tale; and to the medieval knight or burgher, could he join us in a summer excursion, the world of telegraphs and locomotives, of electric weaving and photographic pictures, would doubtless appear a scene of enchantment. But when we consider that all our boasted discoveries are only of things that for thousands of years have stared us in the face; that the light, the vapour, the voltaic current, have been ever wrapped around and thrilling through the earth, and only today are brought to the service of our will; that the new-



found gold which stirs the world with fresh migrations has all the while been stored not a furlong below human feet; that no planet has been found that was not always there, and no law deciphered that was not written from the first upon the vault of time; we must marvel rather at the tardiness than the swiftness of our apprehension, and confess ourselves but fools and slow of heart to perceive what the finger of God has plainly writ. Tested by our school of opportunity it is little that we do, and an infinitude that remains undone. Whatever may be the triumphs reserved for future times, the realities they may disclose are with us now, were we not too blind to see them: if we lift our arm, we very likely knock against them: if we open our eyes, we look through the space where they exist: if we draw a breath or smell a flower, we inhale perhaps the element that holds them: and yet it may be a millennium hence ere what is present in fact comes out in thought. So long as man has been tenant of this universe, with free range through crypt and corridor, it is wonderful how little he knows his way about it: the closet here, the watch-tower there, to which he can introduce you, are as nothing to the vast halls and sublime ascents that lie around and above him unexplored.

It is curious to observe, that *some* truth and good we miss by reason of their distance and complexity; some, on account of their nearness and simplicity. Physical laws, even when they press upon us close at hand,

sweep through a range of space and time that may long keep them from the grasp of our reckoning and admeasurement. The force of gravitation, though present since the world began, in the pressure of every weight and the curve of every missile, had its action also in distant skies, and could not have been computed, even by a Newton, till the report came in of the forms and motions there. And though the crust of the earth is forming today no less than in the primeval Past, its fabrication is so slow and the cycles of its history are so vast, that till we had learned a more august chronometry than that of sun and moon, and hung in our imagination a pendulum that would take the years by millions at a swing, the combinations could not be made which would disclose the order of events. And even where the objects of our quest are close upon us in date and place, they may evade us by not lying within the sphere of our direct perception, and so being distant from our feeling, if not from our position. Thus it is that the relations between light, heat, electricity and magnetism, though ever busy in our neighbourhood or ourselves, are disengaged only through experiments bringing them artificially into the area of sense. It is always the greatness of the field, or the length of the duration, or the intricacy of the relations of physical laws, that renders their detection difficult and late.

Moral and spiritual truth, on the other hand, is apt to evade us by its extreme nearness and simplicity.

The inner facts and revelations of our own nature are too little removed from our centre to be distinctly apprehended. The pity that stirs us we know not why, the admiration that burns in silence on the heart, the prayer of aspiration which no liturgy can express, the recoil from sin, (like the spasm of the mountaineer in tainted air,) are realities too close to us to be readily brought into appreciation. The outer coatings of our life, the occupation that involves us, the evidence we examine, the decision we pronounce,—it is easy to apprehend and criticize; but the nearer we approach to the inner kernel of our being, and retire from what we *do* to what we *are*, and sink back into the very colour of the soul, the more are we bathed in a beauty that lies hid, and lose ourselves in the good we seek. In proportion as God's Holy Spirit finds abode with us, do we know it to be beyond our criticism, and surrender to it without a question more: the eyelids inquisitively stiff droop with indrawn reverence: we claim nothing, we doubt nothing, we possess nothing, but are ourselves possessed by what alone has right over us to do with us as he will. Hence, the saints and prophets of the world, who have most shown us holiness, have defined it least; and have been too pure to say what purity may be. Where feeling is intense, and the vision is single, and the love is strong, knowing is merged in being, and thought, carried off in her chariot of fire, is aware of nothing but the blaze.

This therefore is the hindrance to clear apprehension of moral and spiritual truth. Till conscience kindles to enthusiasm and brings us to self-surrender, the *things to be known* are not fully present with us ; and when they are, the *conditions of knowing* are sublimed away. I do not say that this blind afflatus is the highest state of which we can conceive. So long indeed as we must choose between insight without inspiration, and inspiration without insight, let the human light be drowned in the Divine power. But it would surely be a higher thing to be the conscious medium of God's Spirit, able to read it as it passes through ; to evolve it into knowledge whilst it flashes into act ; and direct its way through the prism of reason ere it shoots into the upper air of faith. The time must surely come when it will be no longer impossible to find prophet and philosopher in one ; when we shall not have to take our part with groping reason or holy trance ; but to know with the intellect, to sacrifice with the will, and adore with absolute affection, shall be the act of a moment and the temper of a life.

This, meanwhile, is the perfection of the Infinite Mind himself ; to be all good, and know all good ; the being not hindering the knowledge, and the knowledge not spoiling the being. None of the causes which bound and retard our apprehension have any existence in him. As Author of that which we only seek, his thought was beforehand with every object that ours

laboriously follows : as Disposer of the whole treasure of the Universe, he knows where it is stored. By no vastness of sweep can physical relations evade him, the diagrams of whose geometry are writ with stars through every field of space ; of whose optic laws the closet lamp and the remotest ray of the midnight heaven are concurrent illustrations ; and whose Intellect flings out all phenomena as its experiments. By no occult seat too near the centre of his being can beauty and moral excellence lie hid from him who has planted them out in his creation and bid them realize themselves in the souls of men. Nature, his storehouse of actual, and conscience of possible good, bear witness that he not only is, but intends, not only comprises within, but sets into the sphere of fact and obligation without, whatever is orderly, faithful, and holy. There is something wonderful in the thought that the realities which we slowly discover are present all the while to him ; that the secrets for which ages pine and sigh lie clear within his silence close at hand ; that in every observatory where the patience of many a generation has grown grey, there is an eye that sweeps beyond its field ; in every chamber of study a Reason where no darkness is, yet only pitying our prayer for light ; in every library a living Mind, of whose forethought all that pomp of lore and science is but the broken afterthought. Shall we complain that he keeps us waiting so long for the vision that is

ever his, and makes us in such long succession "die without the sight"? Shall we begrudge the toil and tears through which, little by little, we reach the beauty of his ways, and say, 'Come, let us be as gods at once'? Ah! no; this would be the cry of lazy pride, which would make a darkness though he were to send all his light, and could hear nothing, though he told in thunder all he knew. Rather may we feel, that, if only we draw a little nearer to him day by day, it matters not so much whether we are baffled by this or that; for if we cannot find it, it will still be there: his eye, which seeth every precious thing, will hold it in view till the hour strikes for it to be born. He does not owe his truth and good to us; it is we that owe ourselves to it, and must serve it gladly, whether in distant fields or beneath its living look. The clear glances he may send us, the secrets he may confide to us, may well make our heart leap with joy: but though he should tell us no news, our work is still the same, and our allegiance quite as sacred though less glad. And when once we bring ourselves, not to clutch at truth and beauty as if they were our property, but piously ask them to take us by the hand; not to deal with life and the world as if set up for us to make pictures of, or to have opinions about, but to approach them as God's form of manifestation which we may watch if we hush our breath and take the sandals from our feet; we find repose and security instead of

doubt and unrest in his silent and eternal patience. What is lost will be recovered, what is missed will yet be found; for all is stored in him; and is but reserved as his everlasting answer to human fidelity and trust.

“His eye seeth every *precious* thing.” But there are a great many things, in this world at least, that are not “precious” at all: indifference and ease, which are burdens upon the life of the world; vanity, selfishness, and malice, which are its poison and pestilence. These things also are not unseen by him: lurk they under ever so fair a disguise, the cloak of wisdom, the decencies of wealth, or the gloss of an untarnished name, he looks at them with divine sorrow and displeasure, and leaves them till they turn and look at him. It is the shadow of his glance that falls on them; for evil ever hides itself and skulks before his holy face; and a man whose life and thought are only for himself feels hurt and flurried at the name of God, and helpless as in a strange land without interpreter. But it is with a soft light and a tender meaning that “His eye seeth every *precious* thing”; drawn thither by likeness and the affinity of love, and resting there with pure content. His perception singles out the jewels of the universe, like the telescope that passes rapidly over darkness and negation and pitches searchingly on stars. It is but an empty metaphysic dream to suppose his gaze and presence so equal and

universal, that he makes no difference between here and there, and is above (we should rather say below) acknowledging a favourite abode.

Where then are we to look for the retreat he chiefly seeks? It is not,—for that were a Heathen dream,—with the rich aspiring Intellect ; it is not,—for this were a Stoic pride,—with the labouring Will, that he dwells and brings the witness of his peace ; but with those who can leave off claiming anything at all, and, standing free of the ligaments of self, can yield to him possession of what they are and what they have, and say, “ Lord, use us as thou wilt, and turn us this way and that ; only stay with us till eventide, and then may we put our hand in thine, as the hand of a little child that is led out in the dark.” The soul that can thus throw open the door of her tent, and hang the curtain back for the breath of heaven that bloweth where it listeth, is soon aware that a Holy Guest has entered in, and asks the tender welcome he has a right to command, and puts a coolness on every heated passion, and fills all the place with an air of meditation and divine communion.

Thus at least we must speak of him and to him, in his relations to our own spiritual life ; and of his “ Absolute ” essence, I suppose, we cannot speak at all. God in himself, as he was before ever a soul existed in his likeness, and while yet every precious thing was shut up within his unexpressed infinitude,



may be the sort of impassive sublimity that some imagine; a palace of mere intellectual space, where you vainly seek a surface on which any colour can be flung; without love, without preference, without sorrow,—a shadowless light equivalent to universal darkness. But God in the midst of a mixed universe, Lord of the eternal contest between good and ill, has an eye for “every precious thing,” mingles with every noble strife; burns in the blush of holy shame, aspires in our heavenward aspirations, and weeps in our repentant tears. In the saddest haunts of sin, the rotting life of great cities, he sees the scanty blossoms that yet assert their native beauty here and there; the fresh possibilities of good that come again with every new and unspoiled life; the precious simplicity of the child, spreading an open field and the cleanest furrows for the good seed that faithful hands may scatter; the preternatural haste of the first great sin and its slowly-smothered compunctions in the retrospect; the manly resolve, the womanly endurance, the human generosity, the divine faith, gleaming through the smoke, but caught up and cherished by no earthly sympathy, and pressed upon by fierce temptation till overwhelmed and lost. Let the strife of conscience be feeble as it may, and on a spot however unlovely, he mingles with the scene and is there to cheer the good fight: the very prison bars cannot avail against his holy Spirit; and the noisome places of humanity, that stop the advances

of our fastidiousness, are not without the visits of his infinite purity.

Whoever is tempted to dismiss these things as dreams of too transcendent faith may be assured that, in forgetting them, he loses the inmost soul of human charity. Love and patience sustain themselves, not on the infirmities and grievances which they see, but on a perfection behind which is as yet invisible. In the pride and glory of life that dazzle so many thoughtless hearts, it is wholesome to remember how different are the actual proportions of things as discerned by him that is ever in the midst; how many of the first are really last, and of the last are first. Deep in the recesses of private life, shrinking from public ways, he sees many a noble purpose intensely working its silent way; or a hidden sorrow consuming its own smoke, and turning it to flame; or a sweet and self-denying patience, bearing the thorny cross under the gay attire, and covering the plaintive hymn beneath the notes of joy. Life is deeper than it seems; and it may well check our petty cavils and censorious judgments to remember, that he who sees and loves according to the truth of things may have his place and dear abode in the inner mind of the very neighbour we criticize and the heretic we shun; may think nothing at all of the small matters we derisively apprehend, and gently love the greater ones we blindly overlook; and find not only many a precious thing concealed from us, but gracious

affection and pure thought that do not even see themselves. Nay ; have you never known among your own friends, one whom you would completely misjudge, if you looked no farther than the outward ways and words through which he intentionally speaks ; who lightly plays with the surface of experience, and elastically throws off its severer incidents ; who is reticent of his own troubles and calm towards those of others, as if both were matters of course, to be quickly dismissed into the past and cleared out of the way ; but who, within this smooth and hard activity, hides quite another nature unsuspected by the common eye ; a pathetic thought betrayed only in the flash of humour that tries to suppress it ; a fire of enthusiasm which never reports itself as heat, but simply in the steadfast tension of a noble life ;—a religious depth, unrevealed unless in the books he loves, and in the simple dignity of his presence ? Were you blind to these things, how different and how mistaken would your affection for him be ! What folly then there is in our cynic mood, which either heeds not these inner secrets of the soul, or replaces them by mean conjectures of our own ! There is no human life so poor and small as not to hold many a divine possibility,—its “angel that always beholds the face of the Father who is in Heaven.” And this is enough to make tenderness and reverence nearer to truth than any suggestion of suspicion or impulse of contempt.

And if, on behalf of others, we are to appeal from our own censoriousness to the "Eye that seeth every precious thing," it is likewise permissible, on our own behalf, to make the same appeal against evil opinions that do us wrong, and repeat the Psalmist's prayer, "Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept Thy testimonies."\* There is indeed danger in ever appearing before the Searcher of Hearts with anything like a claim on his approval; and if it were on reviewing *our account with him* that we did so, we should be but as the Pharisee who stood up and boasted himself before God. The measure of his demand upon us is nothing less than the inward vision he has given us of the possible and the best; and of this we must be so conscious of falling far short, that we can come to him only with contrition, confessing that he owes us nothing, and that the approval we fain would ask is forfeited before we ask it.

But though we must be in the wrong with God we may be in the right with men. The measure of their legitimate demand upon us is not our own private ideal, but our common understanding with them, which is but a part of the former. And if, while we are conscious of faithful conformity with this standard, perhaps even of transcending it, they are so blinded by scorn and passion as to revile and disown us, it is not forbidden us to carry our cause to the supreme tribunal, and plead

\* Psalm cxix. 22.

our relative innocency before the face of him who “seeth every precious thing.” In the heat of frightened prejudice or party resentment, men, it is true, insist on regarding the verdict of their court as final, and claim to deal with us as they please; and it fills them with twofold wrath to be told,—in answer to their cry, “Stone him to death,” that there is a heaven open and an Omniscient Judge, who may turn their sentence of death into glorious life. All such trust in an eternal justice they treat with mockery, as a vain defiance of themselves, prompted by spiritual conceit and insolence,—as an insatiable craving for praise, disappointed on earth and so feeding itself on pastures out of reach,—or at least as a fanatic self-gratulation, dressed up in the disguise of piety. So let them rage: the moral universe is not yet surrendered to their mob-law; and all history, no less than faith, proclaims that the illusion of triumph is with them, and not with the victims whom they crush. It comes out at last,—nay, it is already seen in Stephen’s dying look,—that it is not the self-assertive, but the self-surrendered will, not the blind and tricky conscience, but the simple and clear-seeing, that can disregard the stormy passions of the hour and fling themselves on the sympathy of an everliving Righteousness. And if it is permitted to the enlightened but baffled Statesman, when deserted and fallen from his place, to appeal from the voices of the moment to the judgment of more impartial times, with

what right can we call in question the loftier form of the same prophetic trust which looks to a present God rather than to future men? The martyr of conscience,—must he not know himself charged with a truth which is not his own,—with a sacred claim which he did not set up and of which he is an appointed organ? and when cast out on their account, whither shall he take them for hope and shelter but to the Everlasting Love that will not let them die? A guiltless exile in the world, may he not seek his last retreat and say, “I flee unto thee to hide me”? The secret belief that the Lord of conscience loves and accepts each faithful sacrifice is the ultimate and sufficient support of all goodness; dispensing with the chorus of approving voices; replacing all vain self-reliance with a Divine strength; and with the peace of a reconciled nature consoling the inevitable sorrows of a devoted life.

## XIV.

### Christ, the Divine Word.



#### I.

JOHN i. 10-12.

“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”

WE think of God as *having always been*; of everything else we think as having sometime *begun to be*. In order that anything should arise and show itself on the theatre of being, it is necessary that he should be already there; while of that presence of his there is no prerequisite: it is there on its own account; the condition of all things, itself conditioned by none. Wherever our eye may wander in the Universe, we meet with nothing but the transient and perishable; every object lies between two termini, beyond which it is not found: the stretch of duration which it occupies may be longer or shorter, measured off by the tick of a watch or by a pendulum that sweeps the milky way: but, sooner or later as we retreat back from the present,

we reach successively the birth-hour of all things, till the whole visible creation has been read off into annihilation. The generations of men, like the leaves deciduous with the season, have been chosen emblems of fragility in the poetry of every age. The whole life of the race, while it runs up beyond the dates of the historian, is recent in the chronology of the naturalist; and in every museum we see creatures older than our kind,—huge heads that never turned to listen for the hunter's voice, and stony eyes that never looked upon a man. The "everlasting hills" are found to be but the newest fashion of this world; blisters of a cauldron still hot, overlaid by the various cake of the sea-bed. Nay, the very stars, brought into the focus of Science, are melted back into a nebulous infancy, and the heavens wax young as the fresh garment of the Eternal. As God was there at the origin of each, so was he anterior to all; and we naturally think of him, as pre-existing while as yet there was no universe, as filling a vacant eternity and constituting an illimitable solitude. Probably, no such time ever was; and could we retire into that perspective till we had left behind object after object and at last emptied the theatre of whatever *now* stands there, we should find, instead of mere vacuity, some predecessor in its place, still carrying us another stage away, till forced to own that the energy of God is coeternal with his existence. Nevertheless, for our imagination it is easier and for truth of religion it is



nearly the same, to prefix him rather to all things at once than to each in its turn : what is false for no item holds good for the whole ; and we do but collect the truth into a picture, rather than distribute it along a history, when we represent the infinite Mind as once *alone*, with no *scene* at which his presence might be given, no *object* to receive his agency, no *spirit* to engage his love.

Now, going up thither into the past eternity, what, under these conditions, (or rather, in this absence of all conditions,) can we say respecting Him ? If we have foresight of what hereafter will proceed from him, this indeed will furnish us with many true terms in which we may speak of him ; the future agency reflecting a light back upon its source. But if not, if nothing of *His*, but simply *He himself*, be given to our thought, then, as he is dumb, so neither can we open our mouth ; unless it be to say, “ He is what he is.” Unless some sign be given, some relation established, we might as well attempt to describe *Silence* as to give account of him. He is not a Power, for there is no resistance : nor a Cause, for there is no effect. Justice cannot be, where there is no character to deal with : nor goodness, where there is no creature to be loved. Perception, with nothing external to be perceived, action, with no point to which it may be addressed, thought with no objects but what are also thoughts, appear to involve us in endless contradiction. No attribute can be

named which we could assign to that lonely, unrelated God. We could speak of him only,—as we should of darkness or of blank Infinitude,—by mere negation,—that he has *no parts, no limits, no passions, &c.*; and even then, we are dependent on what he shall afterwards create for our knowledge *what* we are to deny to him. In short, in his Primitive and Absolute being, he is inconceivable by us, except with reference to what will be developed from his thought: we must think of him as the hiding-place of all that is possible, as treasuring the thoughts which are the seed-vessels of the future, as the spacious nature within whose depths images shape and paint themselves of universes yet to be. While he himself is actual, all else sleeps within him as merely potential. He *could* express himself: the *power* is there; but, as in a silent soul, it lies latent; present with him, but not thrown out from him; reposing still within his consciousness, undetached from himself, and identical with the inner movements of his spirit. At this “beginning” in the old eternity, that silent “*Word*” of his *was really there*; only, while unspoken, it remained “*with God*”; and, coalescing with his thought, truly “*was God.*”

Now, in this original unity, he remains unmanifested; and when he manifests himself, the expression separates from the thought, and starts into realized existence. The first of the Divine utterances,—a transient yet not a “winged” word,—is the visible universe that looks

down upon our life. The gems of his thought broke and kindled into stars; its rhythm into their great cycles; its perseverance into their unerring punctuality. The glow of his meditation burst into sunshine, and flooded heaven and earth with streams of colour and of warmth. The thunder rolling through the cloud, the surge that shouts the triumph of the sea, the wind that plays upon the glancing corn or whispers secrets amid the forest leaves; the snow which the ocean swallows and the mountain keeps; the river ever fleeting in its bed, yet ever fixed while history grows old; the tribes of living things that keep the earth astir, and use the light for seeing, the air for music and the darkness for their rest; all speak, if we could hear, the moods of his mind; and creation is nothing else than his thinking aloud; the divine Word, coming out at length, whereby all things were made, and without which was not anything made that was made. How far then, now that he has expressed himself, does he stand revealed to us? What can we gather of him from inspection of this physical universe? From the bare study of Nature, apart from the experiences of the human spirit which we carry to it, little, I am persuaded, could be learned of him; and that little, so doubtful and so cold, so analogous to our knowledge of mere forces, so alien to the demand of our affections, that though it might put the crown upon our science, it would be unworthy to tie the sandals of

our religion. For, were there no other reason, the following alone would suffice. All our judgments of conduct and character are of necessity *comparative*: we could not praise and admire even a man *in vacuo*: when our hearts applaud him for something he has done, it is always in contrast with *something other* that he might have done; and when we condemn him for an *act performed*, it is in failure of an act expected. To pronounce a thing wise, we must be clear what would have been foolish; to declare it for the best, we must discern all other possibilities and know them as worse. Every sentence which we pass upon ourselves is relative. We should never feel contrite, had we not the conception of the better to contrast with our perpetration of the worse; nor experience any self-approbation were not our choice of the right a defiance of some opposite temptation. And so is it with all our estimates: they are always relative: they involve a *preference*: and we must have a perception of two things, in order to revere and admire *one*. If then we are to estimate God as the Creator of this universe, if we are to regard it as an expression of his character, we must compare it *as it is* with some other universe that *might have been*: in our imagination system must stand against system, and the order that prevails must be seen to be better than any rival scheme which was no less open to selection. Need I say, that to such comparison we are utterly incompetent? To *decipher* the

laws under which we live is our highest achievement : to *try them* by a standard beyond themselves exceeds our most ambitious wisdom. Where is our store of *possible universes* by which to test this actual, and say this would have been better and that would have been worse ? Are not we ourselves, including the scope of our imagination and the modes of thought, shut in by the very frame-work which we pretend to view and judge from without ? Among the arrangements which we find around us, we may indeed shuffle the cards of change and calculate the effect if here a law were modified and there another suspended ; but these paltry experiments, in which natural theology delights, are too often but vain and dangerous conceits ; presenting us, it is likely, not with possible, but with impossible arrangements ; like amendments in the details of legislation which contradict the provisions of the whole. Creation, which lends us all our principles of criticism, must needs harmonize with them, and be internally at one with itself. That God's thought has been carried through in every part and shines out as its divine beauty,—*this* it is given us to see ; but to go up to that very thought itself, to see it lying amid competing thoughts which he has not been pleased to take, to scrutinize it with critic's glance and pronounce upon its claims to be ;—this is nothing less than for the summer insect to judge the solar light, or the animal-cule of the sea to estimate the tides in which it lives.

In nature then, and in the long run of human history, God undoubtedly comes living into our presence ; makes the first step out of silence and reserve ; but to what does the Word amount ? Simply to this ; the Infinite Mind expresses itself as against *No mind* : of the affections that are supreme there and the tendencies that determine the Divine choice, there is here no articulate expression for us : He alone, not we, can look abroad over actual and possible at once, and see whether all is good. As revealed in the universe he remains a distant and an awful God, who utters no dear tones, but only says, "I am no Fate" ; and we move across his immensity, not as on the meadow path that leads us to the sheltered home, but like the little boat upon the midnight sea, or the lonely traveller on the trackless Alp.

Are we left then in this cheerless mystery ? Does he merely assert himself against the Atheist's idols, and then retire within, breathing to us no secret of his inner nature ? Far from it. He expresses himself in a deeper and diviner form than the look and laws of visible nature, or the wide sweep of human history : the *natural Conscience* of every individual soul is his own pure Word, by which we know at once the Law he loves, and feel the demand of his wakeful eye. Declining to be judged from without, he comes to us readily within : transcending our criticism, he bends to our sympathies : hiding himself in august reserve in the

great fields of space and time, he meets us freely in the private lot; speaks with the child in her little duties and with the parents in their daily cares; visits the thoughtful in their closet, and the tempted struggling to be faithful in the world. That he is missed by the proud intellect and found by the meek heart is not strange, if he be personally foreign to the one, and immediately present to the other; if the former be the human effort at independence, the latter, the divine stooping to spiritual contact. And that it is so, surely every unspoiled mind has direct witness in itself. The voice of Duty,—what is it, if it be *not* the suggestion of God? Is it the mandate of your own fancy, imposed upon yourself,—the mere imperative mood in the soliloquies of your own will? Not so; for were the law of your making, you might forgive its violation, and the thought that set it up might take it down; yet you feel its authority above your reach, and your boast of indifference to be a sad pretence. Is it a mere echo of men's opinion,—a deference to their arbitrary demands? Not so; for how often does it lift you above that opinion, nerve your heart to withstand the injustice of a crowd, and to fight the good fight though in the forlorn hope alone! As well might you persuade me that my own eyes created the daylight or that the sunshine was the gift of public opinion, as that the sense of right was anything but the direct illumination of God, the piercing ray of the

great Orb of souls. Not more certainly does Perception teach us what is external to our senses, than Consciousness what lies beyond our personality; and that the authority of Justice, Purity, and Truth is no manufacture of my own, but is imposed upon me by a Divine source above me, I am no less sure than that the stars are not twinklings of my vision and the thunder is no rumbling in my brain. God sets the whole problem to our free will; its outward opportunities,—the theatre of right action,—being spread by his physical Providence; its inward inspirations,—the index of right action,—being the immediate breathings of his Mind. And thus first do we learn that he is *Holy*; and putting together the different expressions of his being, we add to the divine sublimity of Nature a sense of the sanctity of life.

Thus then does his system of normal expression complete itself: in the outward universe reporting that he is; in the inner heart, that he is holy. Is he not then, you will ask, adequately known? What more is needed than this faith of nature? Nay, what other field or medium of expression remains possible, when both creation and the mind are already occupied by him? Among many replies, let one, and that the simplest, just now suffice. That Word which communes with the private conscience is a whisper faint and mild. If you were solitary on the theatre of things, where only nature was present and no voice passed from



soul to soul, you would cease to hear it, and the gentle monotony of God would die away. Again, if you lived in society, but only with souls upon a level with your own ; if day by day the common-places of your own being repeated themselves all round to the utmost horizon of your view ; if no heroism ever flashed upon your eye ; if no nobler goodness, no saintlier spirit, no life of higher sacrifice, gleamed on you from history or experience ; then too the music of the Divine Word within would be overpowered by the vulgar voices of your kind, and would never penetrate the cries of the market and the hum of the streets. It is when his murmurs in one soul meet response in the thrill of another, that both look up and listen ; and for this harmony it is needful that there be some interval between them, and the leading of the melody should rest with one alone. Thus to disclose himself spiritually to one mind, God must take possession of two ; and while he leads me to surmise his will within, he must present me with an image of it without. Left to itself, his mere *subjective* Revelation grows dry and sickly, and at last obscurely withers up. For you and me,—for each man and woman separately,—this would be *partially* prevented by simply living among minds of various ranks, ever presenting here and there something that is above us. By thus communicating himself in different degrees to different natures, God exhibits the moral landscape of his being in a thousand cross-

lights, and now by the shadow of the cloud, now by the glory of the sun, opens the divine perspective to our view. In this however, though there is some particular guidance for each, there is no comprehensive revelation for all. Gazing from distinct personal points, men look upon a different sanctity, and are scarce secured in an identity of God. Though to no one is denied the influence of some nobleness higher than his own, some heroism that wakes him from his selfishness, some purity that draws his penitential tears, some flashing word of genius that doubles his spiritual horizon, still these are limited and contingent experiences, which touch him but in part, yet are liable, through their intensity, to be accepted as the whole. It is doubtless better to be thus captive to special enthusiasms than to be negatively free from all; as it is better to worship a saint or an angel than to have no God. But, for its deepest power, Religion depends on harmony: violated proportion spoils it: it cannot be pieced together from an accidental assemblage of exclusive admirations; it needs some vital and generating centre, whence to shape itself forth in all dimensions from its own essence. Moreover, in transfiguring our gleanings from human excellence into a vision of Divine Perfection, there is always the difficulty of freeing them in our thought from the concrete conditions of time and place which cling to their image, but which cannot pass into the transcendent sphere. The scattered virtues of his-

toric men are tied up with relations,—patriotic, civil, domestic,—impossible to God ; and to disengage the essential attributes of righteousness from these media of their expression and qualify them for a place in the Supreme Mind involves a process of abstraction not to be expected from all.

There are thus imperfections and indistinctness still left in the “ Word ” which God embodies in our humanity. We need some expression of his moral unity, some single point in which to gather up the manifold glories of his will and character, a focus for blending into pure light the colours so parted and broken by the sad clouds and gleaming showers of this world’s atmosphere. As, amid all individual varieties, there is *one* faculty of inward Conscience for our whole race ; so it is fit that, amid the diversities of partial examples and ideals, there should be *one* outward standard of all that is sacred and holy ; that once in history God should not simply *visit* a soul, but wholly occupy it ; that he should so extend his presence there as to exclude whatever would oppose itself, and reveal the perfect relation between the human spirit and the Divine. Herein lie the “ grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ.” In completely realizing the filial relation to God, he at once glorified the dependent, obedient, suffering life which is assigned to us ; and rose to the height of that divine kinship which makes the affections of heaven and earth reciprocal, and identifies the

essence of moral perfection in both spheres. The Man of Sorrows is our personal exemplar ; the Son of God is our spiritual ideal ; in whose harmonious and majestic soul, imperturbable in justice, tender in mercy, stainless in purity, and bending in protection over all guileless truth, an objective reflection of the Divine holiness is given us, answering and interpreting the subjective revelation of the conscience. Nor is it without significance, that his solitary and homeless position, his free and wandering life, his various contact with every light and shade of the human drama, deliver to us the impression of his inward spirit, the cast of his affections, and the characteristics of his will, as a pure image of character, divested of local limits, unconstrained as the wind, and flexible as the compassions of God. What wonder then that here we make a further step in our conception and colouring of the Infinite Perfection ; and that as humanity served for its symbol better than nature, so in Christ we find a higher and intenser than in humanity at large. And when it is said, of this personal appearance of divine qualities of mind on the theatre and under the conditions of human life, that the " Word " itself " was made flesh and dwelt among us," the phrase simply affirms that these qualities are not mere earth-born and animal phenomena, but are really the Living Word of a heavenly sphere and speak of God. This is no more a " figure of speech " than the plainest sentence we can frame respecting things

transcendent. I know not whether others can draw a sharp line of separation between the human spirit and the Divine, and can clearly say, where their own soul ends and God's communion begins : but for myself, with closest thought, I confess my darkness ; and can only say that somehow he certainly stirs among our higher affections and mingles with the action of our proper nature. If, in Christ, this divine margin was not simply broader than elsewhere, but spread till it covered the whole soul, and brought the human into moral coalescence with the Divine, then was God not merely *represented* by a foreign and resembling being ; but *personally there*, giving expression to his spiritual nature, as in the visible universe to his causal power.

Such is the thought which inspires the marvellous Gospel of my text. He, whose intellect overarches us in the vault of stars, whose beauty rests on the surface of the earth and sea, embodied his affections and his will in the person of the Son of Man. By the same Divine Mind whose gentlest glories centred in that lowly form, was the world made in which he was ; yet the world knew him not ; and though he came only to his own, his own received him not.

## XV.

# Christ, the Divine Word.



## II.

JOHN i. 14.

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

FROM the verses immediately preceding this text I have already endeavoured to show how the distinction is drawn between God himself and his finite manifestations; what are the relative functions of his several media of expression, kosmical, ethical, historical; and in what sense Jesus Christ has place among these, and has supplied an element in which they were previously defective. In further illustration of the position thus assigned to him, I proceed to show its harmony with the larger and prior “Word” of God, and to meet the objection that this universe is too great for any revelation by a human personality. In doing this, I will start from a striking remark of Immanuel Kant, who says; “There are two things that fill my soul with a holy reverence, and an ever-growing wonder; the spectacle of the starry sky that virtually annihilates

us, as physical beings; and the moral law, which raises us to infinite dignity, as intelligent agents.”\* Between the two sources of wonder named in these deep words there is an apparent antithesis but no real variance. A well-balanced mind will not be obliged to deny the one in order to feel the other; but will lie freely open to both together, and through their very contrast will blend them in profounder harmony. Our littleness as natural objects, our insignificance beneath the vault of night, does not contradict our greatness in the sphere of souls; there is nothing to hinder our being conscious of both together. Nay, it is precisely when we drink in the greatness of the universe, that we least miss the diviner life within ourselves; precisely at the solemn moment when the stellar circles glide over our head, and the worlds sweep on profuse as spray from the hidden ocean of creative power; when the stillness of nature dissolves us away, and we watch the lights and listen to the leaves, scarce knowing that we have eye or ear; when in space measurement we are not only dwarfed but absolutely quenched, and become a mere point to mark the zero of physical existence;—then is it that, in the profound repose of sense, we wake up to the grandeur of our moral being, and feel, as if from the transparent air, the infinite purity we are bound to seek; that the deforming stains

\* Kritik der praktischen Vernunft. Beschluss. Werke (Rosenkranz & Schubert), B. VIII. 312.

of passion, like the village smoke when the fires of day are dying on the hearth, seem wiped away; that we own ourselves to belong to One who is deeper than the universe; and opening our heart to him, become so conscious of a kindred nature, as to be no longer overpowered by the stars. Standing on the threshold of physical extinction, we are in the very position for looking out through the gate into heavenly glory. Indeed the act of discovering our littleness is in itself a thought of greatness; and for a being to know himself nothing, he must already be something sublime. It is therefore quite possible, in taking the scale of our existence, that as the material measure sinks, the moral should rise; that the naturally trivial should be the spiritually grand. Nature indeed has two vanishing points, at opposite ends; one dipping into nothingness, the other rising into God; and it matters not that physically we are but transient and cheap elements in the system, if spiritually we stand near that extremity whence, instead of being drowned in negation, we are thrown into Divine adoption.

Yet there are men heedless enough to plead our physical littleness in evidence against our moral greatness; and to consider the scale of human life too poor for the embodiment of anything divine. And this plea is urged as a presumption against the revelation of God which Christendom has recognised in the person of its founder. When we announce that, once



in history, He who lives in us in proportion to our purity of heart, did entirely occupy a human soul, so as to express through it his love, his pity, and the beauty of his holiness; when we say that, as the heavens declare the dimensions of his outer glory, the Son of Man shows forth the colour of his inner spirit; when we teach, that while nature is his work, and man his image spoiled by the touch of our poor art, Christ is his portraiture drawn by the rays of his own light;—we are told that such a faith is mere self-exaggeration; that to look on any member of our kind as the vehicle of a moral incarnation is a conceited overestimate of our position, more befitting the beaver and the ape who know nothing of the universe in which they live, than man who is aware of its immensity. The objector bids us look around us and above; he conducts us into the fields by night. He shows us the fair planet with its moons from which the light, with all its speed, takes some time to come. He reminds us that through all the visible hemisphere this is our nearest neighbour; that not one of those twinkling points could we reach, though we rode upon a sunbeam, without travelling through fifty lives; and that from most that we behold the very ray this instant falling on our eye set out before the opening of human history. He tells us that our very globe, which it has taken us so many centuries to survey and subdue, is but a speck of invisible dust from almost every station in the sky; and he asks

whether it is credible that one of the beings on its surface should be the concentrated expression of him who builds and moves and balances this mighty scene. If even the Hebrew poet, to whom the heaven was but a roof o'erhung with lamps, could not but exclaim beneath the moon and stars, 'Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him?' how can the modern European, for whom the universe has burst from a decorated closet into an open infinitude of glory, dream the dream of a localised and impersonated revelation?

I am far from denying that there are views of Christianity against which this appeal to the scientific imagination may operate with great power. Nay; it is hardly to be supposed that, if Paul the Apostle, as he lay on deck by night, had looked into the clear Ægean sky with the eye of Newton, it would have made no difference in the form of his faith and expectation. He could no longer have thought of the heaven that held his immortal Christ as of the heaven of the Ascension, a colony just above the clouds, whence in a day the procession of the saints might come. The earth of the Advent could scarcely have been retained by him as the centre of the divine Monarchy, the metropolis of Time and Providence, to which all eyes were turned, and where the heir of all things should receive the homage of the universe. Had the Apostle known what affluence of worlds there is, and how they lie in the perspective of space, I suppose he would have been content with

giving his gospel a human significance, and have reduced his doctrine from kosmical to terrestrial. This, which he could not in that age do for himself, the developments of history and knowledge have done for him; and when, under this correction, all the theocratic elements of the early Christianity have been removed, and it becomes simply a moral revelation of God to the human soul in the person of Jesus, it can no longer be allowed that the slightest presumption against it can be drawn from the infinite scale of the material frame of things; and those who think to consume it by reflecting rays upon its insignificance from the mighty concave of the universe, will find it evade them in the focus like an ethereal point.

It is thought incredible that a Being infinite as God should reveal himself through anything so small as the person of a man, or become in any way identified with one particular created soul. And so it would be, if his special *presence with Christ* involved his *absence* from any corner of the universe,—if his light were fainter in other minds for being so rich and full in Christ's,—and he were less with remote worlds, for being more with ours. Whoever conceives that *God in person* came and lived the human life, and so dwelt in the villages of Galilee and the courts of Jerusalem, as to be in the least withdrawn from Thessaly and Rome, from the planets or the Pleiades, has a faith worthy of the Lycaonian peasants, who took Barnabas for Jupiter

and Paul for Mercury. The Infinite cannot become finite, the Eternal retire into time, the ocean of everlasting power turn into one of its own mountain streams. But what hinders a limited nature being filled throughout and pervaded by the unlimited? a human soul from so absorbing the Divine spirit as to leave no room for anything of lower grade? In excluding all but himself from the spirit of Christ, and permitting neither shade nor flaw in the clearness of his image there, God did not vacate any other medium of expression, or prejudice his living agency in any portion of space or thought. No star throughout the firmament missed him the more, that he so purely shone in that fair life. No sorrowing heart cried to him in vain, because the angel of consolation was watching in Gethsemane. No guilty will was left without his warning look, because he was in the desert, strengthening his holy one to triumph over temptation. It is not as though the grace and power of God were a quantity that could be used up. From not a place, not a moment, not a creature, did the divine tide ebb to make the flood that rose within the soul of Christ. Nay, were there not a sacred effluence abroad, there could be no concentration on a point. The lens which brings the sunbeams to a focus makes no darkness in the air; and a mind which gathers into it the rays of holy love and goodness, not only leaves all else bright as it was before, but shows of what a pure and brilliant

essence the shadiest of visible humanities still have a share. Do you say, our nature is so small? Then it is the easier for the divine to fill it quite. It is a little thing for him, but it is for us the greatest, that a nature like our own should appear as his pure receptacle; should be simply at one with him; should harmonize what is discordant, revive what is lost, realize what is sighed for, in us; and reclaim the type of being, so sadly stained and marred, which is his own image here below. Who is injured or slighted by the beauty of such a gift? If other worlds were jealous on this account, we might well look up on the foolish stars and say, 'Is our eye evil, because to us the great God is good?' But for us to *invent* and volunteer such fancies for the universe, and disown the blessing on their account, and take it to be all self-flattery,—this surely is the very perverseness of a doubting heart.

But again; the attempt to extinguish an historical and personal revelation beneath the immensity and eternity of the universe, implies a misconception of the thing revealed. Had the problem been, to show us the scale of God's existence, the survey of his dominions, the method and final issue of his rule over nature, certainly no vehicle could seem less fitly chosen than a few years' segment of a human life. For all these things, however, provision had been made since the spheres were afloat in heaven, and an eye of reason stationed on the earth to gaze at them. "The heavens

declare the *glory* of God, and the firmament sheweth his *handy work*." But the stars are cold and reflect no rays of love ; their courses are steadfast and answer not the pulses of our passion and our prayer ; their spaces are still and calm as the wilderness, whether our temper is sweet and holy, or heaving in the tumult of the wildest sin. There is something which the Creator has not written on their face,—something demanding colours which the roof and walls of nature cannot hold. Is it his voice that we hear within us, when we deny ourselves, and bear up beneath our cross, because a whisper comes, 'Faint on, dear soul, I am with thee still' ? Is it the hiding of his face that makes our sinful hours so dark, and shakes us with the shuddering of remorse ? and does that awful eclipse take its shadow off, when we spread repentant hands and lift our eyes again, and long to be bathed in the blessed light which we have lost ? To set to rest anxieties like these, to fix our conceptions of God's *moral nature*, to present him in living relation to our affections and our conscience, Space and Time and Motion are of no avail : the expression needed is one that will correct and contradict the negative uniformity of these ; it can be nothing but a free mind, acting under conditions, encountering problems, moving amid sorrows and temptations, which we can interpret and understand. Thought, Love, and Holiness take up no room, and want no huge orbit round the sun. The earth will

serve them as well as heaven; nay, the peasant's home, the young child's heart, will give them verge enough. Godlike qualities, being simply intense in beauty and not mathematically large, can glow within the human limits as clearly as in the scale of infinitude. If there is to be any expression of the Divine *character* at all, it can only be through the lineaments of an *individual soul*, passing through a *concrete and particular life*, and representing the sentiments with which the Soul of souls regards the moral conditions of this world. God, no doubt, reveals himself in our own natural hearts, and vindicates the holiness of his will in the surmises of our conscience. But, somehow, we only half believe them, while they lie hid in our lonely mind: we feel them as they pass, without framing them into a faith: they remain states of ourselves instead of visions of our Judge. Only when we see their form embodied in another, who realizes what we had scarcely imagined, and puts the actual to shame by living out the possible, are our eyes opened to know that we have been conversing with immortal things; that when our hearts burned within us and we heeded it not, it was a holy voice that talked with us by the way; and that the conscience of which we took so poor a heed upon the road was the emblem and expounder of the holiest of all. A visible person entirely holy, living and dying in simple trust and pure obedience, loving nothing but what is dear to God, pitying what is sad before him, and severe only to

the guilt that lies beneath his frown ; a being of sweet and tender humanities, yet transfigured with the intimate converse of divine realities ; a spirit, in short, at once grand and gracious as that of Jesus ; bears down upon us with a persuasion which neither the whispers of our natural heart, nor the thunders of supernatural power, can ever exercise. Such a one stands openly between our thought and God. Whom else would we choose to represent our aspirations to him, saying, ‘ Lord, this is what we mean, when we sigh and pray and trust ’ ? And whom else could he send to show us the approaches to himself, and set us in the true direction for the highest of all ; saying, “ Behold my servant whom I uphold ; my chosen in whom my soul delighteth ; I have put my spirit upon him ” ? Such a mediatorial mind, rising to view like the dreams of conscience and of prayer set in the very sunshine before our eye, becomes to us an objective Revelation, scattering our doubts of God and giving authoritative truth to the faint oracle of our better selves.

Nor let it be supposed that, when the medium of Divine expression is thus an *individual*, the thing expressed cannot be *universal*. On the contrary, all moral and spiritual things, all truths of the *soul*, differ in this from the formulas of science and doctrines of philosophy, that they are more largely conceived in concrete embodiment than in general statement ; and to know the infinite depth there is, the boundless reach of application, in



goodness, love and faith, it is better to look on one saintly life or even a single act of noble *living* obedience, than into whole pandects and bibles of definitions however comprehensive, and precepts however divine. The discernment of a holy heart, like the conceptions of genius and visions of creative art, is caught at a glance, read off from the flash of beauty which streaks the darkness and is gone. But what is seen at that instant is not individual; it is universal. There is no spiritual grace which is personal or limited in its obligation. It makes a binding appeal, it looks with unspeakable attraction, to all free souls. Justice and sanctity, disinterestedness and mercy, simplicity and faithfulness, are not the exceptional specialities of any single life; are not the local adornment of a village or a land; not even the enrichment of a race or of a world; but the common perfections of all regions and all minds; native to heaven and blossoming on earth; breathing in the worship of angels and struggling upward through the conflicts and the prayers of truthful men; the sacred light of the humblest home, and the crowning glory of the Infinite God. All are of one kindred here, and dwell in one abode: before the august and constant moral Law, the spirits of every world bend with venerating awe.

Those who shrink from recognising in Christ a human impersonation of Divine character often press upon us the question, whether then we are to regard

him as a *unique* being, differing, not in degree only, but also in kind, from the just and wise and saintly of every age. I answer by a parable: he that always hits the mark does not differ in kind from those whom he surpasses; yet, if all others fall short of this, he is unique. In truth, the whole antithesis between degree and kind, borrowed from natural history and becoming ever fainter even there, is absolutely empty and unmeaning when transferred to the sphere of moral life. The differences of which the conscience takes cognisance lie entirely among the inner springs of action, as ranged upon a progressive scale of relative excellence; and, thus admitting of comparison and depending on it, can never be anything else but matters of gradation and intensity. To speak of them as belonging to distinct categories or orders of being, is to declare them incomparable, subject to no common measure; and therefore to deny any universal moral law. Among all natures that can speak together of duty and righteousness, and exchange ideas of the right and wrong, there must prevail one system of values, one metrical notation; failing this, there could be no commerce of thought or sentiment. Hence we can neither deny to faithful, heroic, and holy men, to a Socrates, a Marcus Aurelius, a Blaise Pascal, an approach to Christ upon the same line, nor claim for him any pre-eminence that removes them from his fellowship. But neither can we speak otherwise of God himself. He also, with all the in-

finitude of his perfections, is still but the Father of spirits, and on the side of moral goodness differing from his children only in degree: however vast the interval, it is one on which movement never ceases to be possible: the obedience of the little child that tells the truth or keeps his word and suffers, is akin to the fidelity of God who will not break his promise to the universe. In the world of character there is no such problem as that about the "origin of species." All minds that own a better and a worse are fellow denizens of the same City of God, severed by no antipathies of race or impassable barriers of rank; but inwardly conscious of the same authority and revering the same call; knit together in love, in proportion as they draw nearer to the beauty of holiness; and lifted at last into fellowship with the Supreme Perfection.

## XVI.

### The Prayer of Faith.



1 TIMOTHY ii. 8.

“I will that men *pray* everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

THE charge has frequently been brought against the theology of modern Christendom, that it has quitted the realities of religion, grown stranger to the strife and sorrows of human souls, and lost its holy vision amid the dust of criticism and the clouds of metaphysics. Finding God's existence at the far end of the chain of secondary causes and his inspiration in the grave-yard of departed ages, it has superseded all genuine faith in the *Living God*. Placing the evidence of things unseen in the testimony of dead languages, it has contracted the approaches to him into an avenue of books, and shelved in libraries the charters of human salvation. No man seems longer able to see for himself what God is, or even *that* he is, to feel his look, to know his voice, and trace the warm touch of his light. If tomorrow Atheism were somehow to prove true, it would make a

difference, like the explosion of a geologic theory, in our conception of the origin of worlds ; but London and Paris would not feel it as they would the death of a Statesman or a President. The future would lose a hope, the past a sacredness ; but no passion of the hour would be changed, no instant sense of bereavement lay the city low. Few would feel the privation as they would the loss of wife or child :—feel it not simply when they worked themselves up to think of it, but in unconscious hours by dreary chasms in the heart, by the presence of a desolate stillness, and the unnatural dumbness of all the counsels of the soul. They would scarce be seen to wring their hands in anguish, like prophets bereft of their inspiration, or seers suddenly struck blind.

Whether this complaint against modern religion be just or not, may be ascertained by an easy test. What is the doctrine, what the practice, prevailing among us, in reference to *Prayer*? If God be *not* thrust away by us to the other end of nature and of time, then must we feel him among us as our contemporary, must walk with him in the field and street, live with him in the home, and speak with him as the Soul of our soul. If, on the other hand, we take it for a fond superstition and a womanish weakness to *ask* him anything ; if, owning it right to *think* of him as Lord of the universe, we expect no personal notice and seek no contact with his spirit ; if in temptation we imagine that we must

fight without ally,—in sorrow, that there is none to bear our burthen for us; it is plain that we believe him either absent, or sleeping behind the curtain of inexorable law. Where there is no *direct intercourse* between the human mind and the Divine, no mutual recognition, no secret understanding, religion is no more than a tradition; God is no longer our dear abode, our native land, but as some distant country reported by foreign ships, or some invisible star testified by magnifiers of the skies. Faith indeed cannot subsist on silence, any more than the body upon air; and however little conscious of its growing emaciation, it would assuredly soon cease to be. The whole structure of our nature is made for utterance,—for sympathy,—for interchange of thought with thought and love with love; and not more certain is it, that to one who never heard the human voice or looked on the face of his kind Reason would dwindle and Affection wither up, than that they who have no converse with the Highest must find Religion languish, and holy peace entirely die. Are there none who can bear a sad and bitter testimony to this? none, who in the young days of natural wisdom used to pray out of a clear and mighty heart, but in the dry delusions of maturity have given it up because God does not hear; or perhaps have brought themselves, *by giving it up*, to believe that he does not hear? And do they find nothing harsh and chilling in the change? Is their power as serene and lofty as before, or sunk to a coarser

energy and fevered with the heats of passion? Is the weight of care as light, and the draught of affection as sweet? Is their humility still a divine contrition leading to quiet strength,—or has it become a self-vexation ending in spasms of weakness? Can they still rest in self-forgetfulness upon the Infinite love, and breathe with undiminished ease the air of holy aspiration? Or have these things become as strangers' tales or the memory of dreams? Even so, they will not permanently accept such a banishment. However stifled by negligent practice or by false philosophy, the true instincts of the soul may yet assert themselves again: in the surprises of anguish or deep joy, they will break their seals and cry aloud once more, and prove that nature is too strong for any godless lie. The decline of human nature when withdrawn from God, its instant spring back to him under the woundings of affection, and the invariable consciousness of communion with him in the noblest and holiest men of every age, ought at least to moderate the confidence of the sceptic, and induce him to ask whether his doubt of the power of prayer be a gift of sight or a visitation of blindness.

In vindicating “the prayer of faith,” I do not recommend it as a *duty of service*, as though it were a task which heaven enjoined, and which, if punctually rendered, would fetch down the reward appointed for obedience. Like all works of affection, it cannot be rendered, it can only be imitated, by the Will; and the

external counterfeit, however stamped with serious intent, cannot be owned, in heaven or earth, as the true currency of souls. Nor do I refer to the mind's attempt to operate upon itself by speaking the thoughts and personating the desires of devotion; acting the suppliant's part in order to rise into the suppliant's spirit; practising an hypocrisy, in order to win a sincerity. Passing by this poor mockery, I would be understood to speak of a *direct and mutual communion of spirit with spirit* between ourselves and God, in which he receives our affection and gives a responsive breathing of his inspiration. Such communion appears to me as certain a reality as the daily intercourse between man and man; resting upon evidence as positive, and declaring itself by results as marked. The disposition to throw doubt on the testimony of those who affirm that they know this, is a groundless prejudice, an illusion on the negative side as complete as the most positive dreams of enthusiasm. At least, unless something better can be urged against the doctrine of prayer than the common-places about the fixity of natural laws, I must profess I know of nothing in the constitution of this universe at all at variance with our natural faith in a personal intercourse with God, in his openness to our appeal and our susceptibility to his spirit.

Human nature, ever since it became capable of reflecting on itself, has been recognised as a compound of two elements, represented respectively by the body and



the soul. We present the theatre on which the physical and the spiritual meet, and, through antagonism, struggle into unity. It matters not that the separating boundary is difficult to draw: nature delights in melting colours rather than in rigid lines: but he who, on this account, should deny the differences of things, would only show that petty sharpness that is ever incompatible with wisdom. The broad facts of our own consciousness make us aware, that the physical in us is related to the spiritual as the passive to the active, as the resistance to the power that wields it, as the sensitive to the spontaneous. By the one, we lie exposed to the objects in the world: by the other we go out upon them. By the one, we see and hear and feel: by the other, we know, we love, we will and we aspire. By the one, we have our point of union with the natures below us, and learn about all things that have weight and measure, matter and motion: by the other we are introduced to natures above us, and discern what is known only to wonder, to conscience, and to worship. Had we *no* limbs and senses, all communication with the solid universe would be cut off; the external Space, the visible scene, the open heavens and the shut earth could never find us. Had we *only* limbs and senses, we could never find more than the dead surface of things; their beauty and expressiveness, the meaning of their language, would be beyond our reach; the consciousness of *Duty*, the enthusiasm of love, the presence of saints and the

reality of God, would be hid from us. It is not by the eye alone that a man sheds tears for his sins, nor by the voice alone that he pours forth the sob of desolate affection. It is the soul within him that weeps and sighs, and seizes on the organs of the body to write out its grief upon the light and air. Mark now the chief distinction between these two elements of our nature. The physical *is governed* from without; the spiritual can *govern itself*. The former is subject to the same fixed laws that prevail in other parts of the organised world; the latter is a centre of individual power which issues its own determinations: the former is *under necessity*; the latter is *free*. No act of will can protect the body amid present pestilence; but holy resolution will fortify the soul against temptation. In the one case you lie at the feet of nature: in the other, you are entrusted with yourself.

Now in God also we find the same twofold being as in ourselves. Not indeed that he is subject, as we are, to any rule higher than his own. No one has set up a world for him to live in, and established laws to which he must conform. Only, he has done this for himself. He has *bound himself* by fast resolves, which he carries out from the centre of the earth along every radius that penetrates the stars. All the power that impregnates this vast field is simply and entirely *his*. Science may call it by grand foreign names, and tell you of refraction and polarity, electricity and gravitation; but in the

dialect of reality it is still and only *God*. The frost that binds the waters and the warmth that sets them free; the wind that drives the storm today, and tomorrow lies hushed to see the snow-flake balance as it falls; the light that glitters on the leaves and melts upon the coloured clouds; the life of growing field-flowers, and the sweep of flying worlds; all are but the out-comings of his presence, and the stirring of his will. Throughout the range of the physical creation, so *methodic* is that will, that we learn to know and anticipate its ways, and call them *laws of nature*: no impulse ever disturbs them; no affection ever suspends them; no prayer ever arrests them; they proceed from age to age, through life and death, in their punctual and passionless career; as though they came from the organic nature, rather than the dear heart of God.

God however is infinite; and the laws of nature, like nature itself, are finite. These methods of working, therefore,—which correspond to the physical element in us,—do not *exhaust* his agency. There is a boundless residue of disengaged faculty beyond. As yet you have reached but the forecourt of his being. When you have reckoned up all the forces of ponderable and imponderable nature, when you have spent the resources of every science actual or possible, when you have made the pilgrimage of every world that has been or shall hereafter be, and read through all its ways; you are yet creeping but on the margin of his power, and have

learnt a little of what he does, but nothing of what he is. We estimate *animals* by their habits, but *souls* by their love. And behind and amid all these punctualities of law abides, in infinite remainder, the living and unpledged spirit of God: the traces which he prints on nature are but as the waving water line where the breakers meet the beach: but horizon after horizon beyond, the same tide sweeps alone, and there is the play of ten thousand waves with neither reef nor shore to bring them to account. So is it with the deep Mind of God: out beyond the limit of contact with nature, its energy is not bound to take any given shape, thrown up and determined by its previous force; but is free to rise and play and lapse into itself again. Here, he has made no rule, but the everlasting rule of holiness, and given no pledge, but the pledge of inextinguishable love. In his physical agency, he deals with his objects *in masses*, and imposes everywhere the same liabilities on the same conditions; carrying off in pestilence the weakened bodies of overtasked goodness and of over-indulged luxury alike; and washing from the wreck the clinging form of genius and sanctity, while reserving for the rescue the hardier strength of some graceless dullard. In his spiritual agency, he has not thus committed himself to disregard all moral considerations for the sake of a basis of mechanical order: he may here deal with his objects in detail, and adapt his action to their individual needs and changing character. He

may treat them as if they alone were in presence with him, and were the sole objects of his love and care. The men who prate perpetually of the universality of natural laws, and of their recognition as the sole worship of God, lose sight of this vastest and highest function of the Divine nature, and casting their lead into the shallows of phenomenal existence, imagine they have sounded the unfathomable Mind.

But where, you will say, can we find the action of God's disengaged Spirit? In what sphere do we escape the presence of inexorable law? Show us the place in which he renounces this tie, and acts freshly on the momentary need. The challenge almost brings its own reply. In man there are two elements, the physical and the spiritual: in God there are two agencies, also physical and spiritual. It follows of itself that what is physical in us is subjected to what comes physically from him; while that which is spiritual in us is open to communication from what lives spiritually in him. Where he has bound himself to fixed methods, there we can look for no exemption, and must take the steady good and the stern ill of irrevocable rule. In all external things, in the constitution of our bodies and the dispositions of our lot, in the exposures of climate, the tendencies of health, the awards of worldly failure or success, indeed in every part of our entanglement with *nature*, we must expect to live subject to nature's law. Thus far we are only organisms of a higher

grade : we only stand at the head of the zoological collection which God keeps in his garden of this world ; and thus far he deals with us only as with *things*. But as he has not entirely immersed himself, so neither has he wholly imprisoned us, in the realm of nature and the rules of mechanical causation. Deep behind all this, he has reserved in his own being, and has permitted in ours, a spirit greater than nature, the cause of causes, the legislator of law ; and here it is, between the free mind in him and the free mind in us,—tone springing up in answer to tone, flame bursting out in the focus of flame,—that direct communion and effectual sympathy are left open to us. In all internal things belonging to the higher history of our spirits, in the strife of conscience, the humiliations of contrite memory ; in the upward spring of devout hope, and the despondency of saddened enthusiasm ; in the deep burning of aspiration unquenchable by the damping cloud or sorrowing rain ; indeed through all the mysteries known to faithful hearts,—the strength to take again their broken vows, the sudden break of unearned hopes, like a sun-burst through a threatening sky, the unexpected gleam again, amid a hard experience, of the child's insight of purity and trust ; we may meet his immediate eye, feel the mingling movements of his pity with our affection, and know the gentle voice, "Faint not, thou poor child, here is a hand to help thy way." Thus, from the two parts of

the Divine rule we are exposed to a double discipline, blending submission with aspiration, the severe with the tender, the unbending with the free. We must accommodate ourselves to the stern mechanism of God's natural and *unmoral* laws; and then he will succour us, not by *altering them*, but by *inspiring us*,—by lifting us to bear their burthen,—by throwing open to us the almightiness of his companionship and the shelter of his love. So little can this be called irrational that only the perverseness of an atheistic age could imagine the least presumption against it; or throw any doubt upon the concurrent testimony of the prophets and devout of all times and nations, that they personally lived with God, were conscious of him in the stirrings of their thought, and found from him a distinct answer to their prayers. The perception of him is as clear and certain to their soul,—which is the proper organ of divine discernment,—as the starlight to the natural eye; and to refuse their witness is as foolish as to deny the midnight heaven. True, these faithful men have often overstrained the power of prayer; they have supposed that it might even arrest the career of physical law, stop the hurricane, stay the plague, bring down the rain. But what of this? The first natural idea of the Divine government is that it is *all free*, the spontaneous outpouring of a Mind exempt from rules; and while this, which is the living kernel of all faith, remains an unchecked and unqualified

belief, there will be nothing placed beyond the expectation of the soul in its intercourse with the Soul of souls. The artificial reaction from this belief is in the idea that the Divine government is *all necessary*, the pledged evolution of an eternal mechanism ; and while this superstition,—which is the dead husk of all faith,—remains in possession, all opening whatever will be shut out for effectual and sincere communion between spirit and spirit, earth and heaven. I call this doctrine a “superstition,” because it is an arbitrary extension, not on evidence, but on the suggestion of a wish or fear, of a rule found or inferred in outward nature, to the strongly contrasted spiritual realm, which, beyond its first physical margin, gives it no support. That within a certain range the changes of the mind conform, no less than those of the body, to an order predetermined in its own constitution is admitted on all hands, and employed in every classification of faculties or inquiry into the procedure of memory, imagination, and reasoning. But that this range covers *the whole* of the phenomena of our nature, and leaves no room for the play of a free causality beyond the legislated part, is an assertion far in excess of any proof ; and no one is entitled to make it, till he can show us the fixed order with which all spiritual changes are appointed to comply, and enable us to foresee the biography of an individual and the vicissitudes of history, as an astronomer lays down the orbit of a comet, and predicts the future



of the solar system. Nothing short of this can displace the clear testimony of our moral consciousness, that in every conflict of temptation two ways are open to our will, and that in our pressure towards the better we are supported by a Divine ally.

The principle of the foregoing defence will perhaps appear inadequate, because, by resolving all devotion into communion between spirit and spirit, and surrendering the field of nature to necessary law, it relinquishes supplication for temporal things, and limits the object of prayer to inward conditions of the soul. To a certain extent the inference is just: yet it is subject to qualifications so important as to relieve it of its unwelcome aspect. Undoubtedly, God's rule of action in nature we have every reason to regard as unalterable; established as an inflexible and faithful basis of expectation; and so far embodying the essential conditions of intellectual and moral life; and, for that reason, not open to perpetual variation on the suggestion of occasional moral contingencies. Petitions therefore for purely physical events other than those which are already on their way,—*e.g.* for the arrest of a heavenly body, the diverting of a storm, the omission of a tide, must be condemned, as at variance with the known method of Providential rule. But a large proportion of temporal events are not like these, dealt out to us from the mere physical elements; they come to us with a mixed origin, from the natural world indeed,

yet through the lines of human life, and as affected by the human will. The diseases from which we suffer visit us in conformity with the order of nature, yet are often self-incurred. The shipwreck that makes desolate five hundred homes is due to forces which may be named and reckoned ; yet also, it may be, to the negligence which failed to take account of them in time. Wherever these elements of *character* enter the result, so that it will differ according to the moral agent's attitude of mind, it is plainly not beyond the reach of a purely spiritual influence to modify a temporal event. The cry of entreaty from the bedside of fever will not reduce the patient's temperature or banish his delirium ; but if there be human treatment on which the crisis hangs, may so illuminate the mind and temper the heart and sweeten the whole scene around, as to alight upon the healing change, and turn the shadow of death aside. The prayer of Cromwell's troopers kneeling on the field could not lessen the numbers or blunt the weapons of the cavaliers ; but might give such fire of zeal and coolness of thought as to turn each man into an organ of almighty justice, and carry the victory which he implored. Wherever the living contact between the human spirit and the Divine can set in operation our very considerable control over the combinations and processes of the natural world, there is still left a scope, practically indefinite, for prayer that the bitter cup of outward suffering may pass away ; only never without

the trustful relapse, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

For the rest, he that has once found "the secret place of the Most High," soon ceases to press, or indeed to trust, his own desires; and the more he is lifted into the freedom of the spirit, so much the less resists the necessity of the divine natural order. He is at home in both spheres; and is reconciled to each by the presence of the other. The fixed administration of God supplies to life its subduing and chastening element, its occasions of speechless submission and quiet awe. His free relation to the responsible soul opens the true field for devotion, the place of lonely audience, the living interchange, mind with mind, where the Infinite Father individualizes himself for us, takes up our sighs, and breathes himself into our affectionate will. Of such relation there can be no other and higher evidence than that of conscious experience; and this appropriate and only possible proof is so amply furnished in the records and literature of the religious life of every age, that even from those to whom it may be personally foreign it is not without reasonable claims to respect. What indeed can be less rational than to say, that God is always with us, yet we must never speak to him? How then are we to spend the silent years with him? Strike out from the life of Christ the communings of the desert, of the mountain-top, of the parting meal, of Gethsemane, and the

passing outbursts of thanks and supplication as he pursued his healing way from the baptism to the cross, and what charm or meaning would there be in the flat and vapid residue? Religion is no more possible without prayer, than poetry without language, or music without atmosphere. In the dumb heart it invariably dies; and wherever it lives, it is in the habitual faith that as we "give good gifts unto our children, much more will the heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

## XVII.

### Thou art my hiding-place.



PSALM xxxii. 7.

“Thou art my hiding-place.”

WHEN the ministry of Jesus was approaching its crisis, and its work was prosecuted with earnestness the most divine, we find him habitually teaching in the temple, and dwelling all day in the public courts which were the very focus of the nation's life. At sunrise were the people there, and he poured on their fresh and rested hearts a sweet cool morning light; and the last of the evening worshippers bore upon his memory the tones of that dear and sacred voice. As the shadows rose and thrust the parting glow from the topmost pinnacle, he withdrew into a narrower circle; and may be seen, by the first light of the rising moon, retiring from the city with the twelve and ascending the slope of the Mount of Olives. Many thoughts which shrank from the presence of the temple crowd, came out in these evening walks, feeling the shelter of a softer light and nearer souls. But as the story deepened to its end,

even this became too large a group to stand with him between the worlds, and from the mingling breath of both feel with him the blending tides of trust and sorrow ; and with a chosen three he sought the recesses of Gethsemane, where the voice need not be afraid of its own sadness, or the eye of the streaming of its tears. Yet when he found himself alone with them, and looked in their faces of perplexed affection, he discovered how little of the burden they could lift from off his soul ; and, leaving even this human stay behind, he told them to sit there, while he went to pray yonder. There at length, in that ultimate solitude, did he throw open all the channels of thought and grief. Not till he was at a stone's cast beyond the reach of human sympathy, did he find an ear that could be trusted with his confessions,—a heart on which anguish might weep itself to rest,—a hiding-place where nothing need be hid. Into this Divine centre did he more and more gather himself from the outer and inner circles of his life ; from the multitude to the disciples,—from the disciples to the chosen three,—from the chosen three to the lonely God ; within each narrower circumference revealing what could not be spoken in the wider, and at the point of last resort unbound from all reserve, and melted down as at the focus of an infinite light.

In nothing more than in this feature is the great Model-life a type for ours. There is no human life

without its secrets,—its treasury of thought and love screened from foreign gaze : and nothing more accurately corresponds with the distinctive character of the mind,—nothing more powerfully influences it in return,—than the nature of its arcana,—the matters which it withholds from the eye of curious sympathy. Tell me but a few of a man's secrets, and I understand him better than by all his phenomena. The reserves of men differ far more widely than their external conduct and demeanour ; and under the same appearances are concealed souls whose hidden realms lie apart in remotest latitudes. God is the unerring judge of us all, chiefly because he can read our silences ; and though he calls us to account for “ every idle word,” he knows us better by the thing we *will not speak*. It is not that he denies to our hearts their private corner of unspoken thoughts, or requires us to live with minds exposed throughout to every gaze. It is only in childhood that the transparent soul,—all light without one shaded recess,—is good and graceful. For the child's lesser being is all included in the greater existence of his parents, and can reveal nothing that is not comprehended by their sympathy and anticipated by their knowledge ; and it is always a thing of evil sign, when the smaller nature has secrets from the larger that is ever by its side ; arguing that the relation has been broken between the pure and trusting conscience natural to the one, and the protecting love incumbent on the

other. But to the mature there is a depth in life which the early season of sympathy cannot understand ; and a variety in experience which only Omniscient affection can appreciate and touch with consolation and relief. And hence perhaps it is that, however winning at first may be the man of perfectly free and open character, who shows you at once all that he contains, he fails to satisfy your ultimate demands, and is fitter to be the companion of a sunny hour, than to be asked into the inner shades of a thoughtful and loving being. Where the stream of the soul is deep, however pure and translucent the waters may be, the bottom will be out of sight ; and it is not the noisy sparkling current, everywhere seen through and through, but the river's gliding mass, ever silent in the middle and only whispering at its edge, that reminds you of the lofty source amid far-off mountain solitudes. Doubtless a transparent mind, however shallow, prevents distrust ; but he that suggests to you a hidden region of his soul, retiring before your eye, does not necessarily alienate your trust : whether he repels your confidence, or awakens it with irresistible attraction, depends entirely on *what it is* that seems to shun your gaze.

There are secrets which we may unworthily hold *against* our fellow-men ; by the keeping of which we may secure to ourselves an advantage at their expense. The most characteristic instances are to be found in the two spheres of diplomacy and of commerce,—in



the formation, that is, of *contracts* between nations, in the one case, between individuals, in the other. Whenever, in such affairs, you allow your neighbour to enter into agreements which he would refuse, did he know what you could tell, assuredly you make a tricky and degrading use of the information you possess. If, for example, in framing a treaty, you discern in one of its provisions an interpretation not designed by your partner, and, keeping it close, intend to profit by it by and by, I know not of any honest name by which you can be called. Or again, a merchant, let us suppose, obtains exclusive information that, through large arrivals, his cargo will suddenly lose value in the morning; and he effects his sale tonight. Or, a shareholder privately learns that some act of intended legislation or some project of directors will double, in a few days, the price of some particular stock; and he buys up on all hands from those who are not in the secret. I believe persons are found on every exchange who will defend such transactions as these, and even regard them as representing the very spirit of all bargaining, in which, it is said, each member must take care of himself. If so, let them not wonder that among men uncorrupted by such a school, the very name of "competition" is becoming hateful, and socialistic dreams are taking place of the old reverence for property. The whole fabric of our system of engagements with one another rests on the basis of mutual benefit:

every instance in which one man's profit is, even unwittingly, another man's loss, convicts it of partial failure: every doctrine which justifies the deliberate acceptance of such a gain brings upon it total dishonour. Casuists indeed (both the heathen Cicero and the Christian Paley) have drawn a distinction here; forbidding the trader to use the information which official position or special opportunity may give him; but allowing him the benefit of all such knowledge as he may have purchased by superior cost and enterprise. If he has made elaborate provision for gaining early information,—if he has built swift ships, if he has laid down telegraphs, if he has established confidential agencies in foreign lands, and placed observing eyes in the precincts of legislatures and council-chambers, would it not be hard, it is said, that he should be precluded from using the foresight procured with so much skill? I reply, he is certainly not bound to show his letters to his brother merchants who have taken no such pains to be well-informed. If they miss a happy opportunity, the fault lies fairly, not with his silence, but with their want of enterprise. But he is bound to distinguish between the just and the unjust use of his priority of knowledge; to be tempted by it into no contract which will be manifestly disastrous to the person dealing with him. He may fairly earn the power to buy and sell at the happiest moment within the limits of mutual benefit; but the

right to hand over his own loss to another is a thing that cannot be bought by any capital or won by any adventure. You stand up before your brother eye to eye : you give him fair words about the market prices of today : he goes with you to look at your samples, or see the entries of your stock ; he agrees to take it at the quotation of the hour ; you know all the while the impending fall of tomorrow, and can see by anticipation his look of despair,—the dispersion of his family,—the reduction of his scale of life. In what respect do you differ from the cheat who, having discovered an article to be counterfeit, still sells it for genuine ? or, having found his dice to be loaded, uses the hint to win his game ? Say not that no injury is done, because it is understood that each party must look to his own interests. Mutual understanding may doubtless give warning whether the dealings are to be between knaves or between honest men ; but it can make no right and alter no wrong : it is not the source, but the common recognition, of moral obligation : it cannot rule, but must obey, the law of duty : it simply says, “ Friends, we all own the sanctities of truth and honour here ” ; and to convert this general homage to justice into a plea for injustice is the last depravity of a confused and sophisticated conscience. Vote and agree together as we may, we can neither change nor overpower God's eternal suffrage against selfishness and meanness ; and while that lasts, must a man be

held to degrade himself who uses a secret to save himself at another's cost.

There are also secrets which we may hold, not against our fellow-men, but simply on our own behalf, to shelter us from their disapproval, and preserve our good repute. Few men escape the consciousness of many a weakness which they do not wish the world to know, and which, they may justly feel, the world has not always a right to know. In the presence of an observer, they put a forcible restraint upon perversities of temper, and risings of envy, and cares of discontent, which deprive their inward mind of harmony and peace. Or, in the warmth of some fresh impulse, they bind themselves by professions, from which they are ashamed openly to recede when resolution flags and zeal grows cold; and so, in the hope, faintly returning with every self-reproach, of lashing their will to the promised service, they are driven to self-excuse and pass on to false pretence. Or, while presenting to the spectator a fair and blameless exterior, and seeking the regard of those who cannot smile at laxity of morals, they hide the consciousness of the guilty ways, which the world treats lightly in proportion as it sins heavily. These reserves of shame and prudence cannot perhaps be complained of as *injurious to others*. If the curiosity of every eye could read us through and through, no securities would really be gained for sanctity and truth; and means would be found of estab-

lishing mutual terms without enforcing the ideal and divine laws which now refuse us any peace. The growth of a pure and noble soul requires some solitude: but then it must be a *sacred*, not an *artful* solitude; concealing earnest thoughts, and not triumphant cunning. The disguise assumed by shame and prudence, like the poisoned vest of Hercules, saps and corrupts the strength; and if, by misplacement, it is worn by an heroic mind, that cannot rest without struggles to rend it off, then to its wasting it adds torture too. No one can practise dissimulation respecting evil, without simulating the good: the very act of withdrawing from sight his real vices is inevitably an exhibition of unreal virtues: and that which was meant for the silence of concealment becomes the lie of pretence. He is thus conscious of playing, for his own ends, with what is most solemn and binding in life; of wearing truth, purity, and zeal, as a mask; of borrowing them to put out to interest, or stake in the game of reputation. This is an insult which they will not bear: they will not serve in the inconsistent capacities of accomplices of his tricks and guides to his soul. *Either* they will have him, or he may pretend to have them; but not *both*. The graces which he sends running on his errands of plausibility and good fame, he cannot heartily revere, and will therefore never attain. And thus it is that moral unfaithfulness spreads its fatal poison through the mind: negligence touches us with shame; the

shame is carried as a secret ; the secret forces on us a disguise ; the disguise is an insult to what is holy ; and the insult alienates it from us and leaves the heart without a worship. Nor is the weakness thus induced less certain than the corruption. It is indeed common with worldly moralists to admire, as a mark of strength, the self-command by which unprincipled men, in the game of courts and politics, disguise their real passions, and gloss over their moral deformities. But it is a strength miserably wasted ; exhausted in keeping watch and ward against enemies unknown to natural goodness and dangers which are the unnatural brood of wickedness ; a strength which, if shame did not want it as a sentinel, would be at liberty for excursions of noble enterprise, and in high heart for aggression upon distant ills. A man of parts, whose faculties are pre-engaged to dissimulation, is not free upon the theatre of this world ; and like one who is hiding thefts in every garment and beneath every limb, cannot run and wrestle with the naked athlete equipped only for the struggle and the race. Or, if there be energy and skill sufficient to bear the encumbrance and conquer too, how much lighter and more glorious would the victory be, if every power were clear to throw itself upon the field !

There are however secrets of love and duty differing in their whole effect from the concealments of selfishness and shame. When we hide a brother's fault that

he may be sheltered while seeking his recovery from God, we do not violate the simplicity of Christ, but only mingle the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. There is indeed a wide variety of feelings impelling men, in such cases, to keep the offender's counsel; and we must beware lest we confound unprincipled connivance with redeeming clemency. If we keep his secret when others have a claim to know it,—if we excuse him from confession where openness is due, we simply become partners in guilt instead of distributors of mercy. If we seal our lips, only that he may evade the external penalty of wrong, and fancy himself afterwards “no worse” than he was before, we help him to a delusion more fatal than any betrayal; and sternest enmity were better to him than such easy good-nature. When however we know that all is freely open between him and God,—that he is anxious not to evade but to bear all his woe,—that his effort is not to smother over the past, but to clear and purify the future;—then is it an act of Christian abstinence to breathe no word of his sad consciousness, and to guard the sanctuary of his penitence from the disturbing glare of prying eyes. Only we must see to it that he is hiding, not *from God*, but *with God*; so that he is not, like Eve, skulking behind the foliage and flowers of a fruitful lot, while the Holiest Presence passes by; but seeking rather the shaded recess, the awful caverns, where sole

and solemn audience is found. God loves our mercy to one another; but not upon conditions at variance with sanctity to him.

Hence the safest as well as the largest sphere of reserve and silence is that of *personal and individual duty*; for there, beyond the reach of human sympathy, lies a region of the soul, the contents of which cannot "talk much with us," yet must ever exchange secret looks with God. There is a large part of our moral life,—the nutritive source indeed of it all,—with which others cannot intermeddle, and which will only be parched up by their inspection, and lose all its fruit-bearing efficacy. It is the intimate and lonely passages of experience that consecrate or desecrate all the rest. The night-watches when the head is on the pillow but sleep deserts the eyes,—the private hours when the door of the closet is shut and there is but One that seeth in secret; the inward record of the spirit, illuminated by glowing resolves, or stained by mean motives, or blotted by effacing tears; the self-knowledge of lowered temper and fading purity, or of sweetened affections and serener trust,—belong to a story which it were profane to breathe save to Him who needs no words. The ceaseless flow of thought and feeling through the mind is for ever telling upon us for better or for worse, and often silently preparing momentous catastrophes of character; and only in communion with the Searcher of hearts can we see whither we are tend-



ing, and find the truth of our contrition or our hope. It is the more dangerous to take counsel with others on the hidden life of the soul, because their standard of judgment, formed from their relation to us, is necessarily different from that of God. In order to deserve well of them, and win their approving gratitude, we have only to exceed what they have an acknowledged right to expect: we are tried by the measure of a common understanding which is often low enough. But to be clear before him, we must do and be the best that he has put it into our hearts to see as right; and just so far as we fall short of this, are we unfaithful in his sight; so that our very merit towards men may be our demerit towards him. How then can we for a moment bear their voices of eulogy, and help feeling every word of praise as a stab of reproach? Or, if the winning tones beguile us, for how poor a bribe do we miss the divine sorrow which is our due! Far above the levels of human intercourse, there must ever be a supreme seclusion of the spirit, whither its highest visions can gather in silence, and feel for the touch of the all-realizing God.

It is not, then, a good sign when men become voluble and garrulous, even in their religious associations, about their vows and repentances and prayers; and the very act of turning private resolutions into open pledges lowers their quality and lessens their intensity; confesses their inherent weakness, and sinks them from

divine to human. The deepest power is usually silent ; and the boisterous professions of the impetuous Peter could not stand like the sweet and quiet love in John, that promised nothing, but followed the leadings of a secret constancy, and used to the utmost the momentary gift of strength. And herein, the outspoken Protestant enthusiasm that pours out all its experiences, and gives tongue to every frame of rising aspiration,—though infinitely preferable to the heartless avoidance of whatever is sacred by the shallow and the sceptic spirit,—is less deeply true than the older discipline of Catholic reserve ; the unspoken vow, the unacknowledged cross, the hidden sorrow, the dear and solemn secret with our God. When we preserve such understanding with him, our relation to him becomes more confidential and devout ; we converse with him eye to eye, and thought to thought ; and walk ever in the consciousness of a holy intelligence between him and us. In the case especially of private trials that are assigned us, may we not say that there is a certain treachery in needlessly speaking of them, and treating them as matters of public concern ? Is it not a part of the trust committed to us, that the suffering is to be *ours*, and that we are so to keep it that it shall not spread ? In many a disabled life, cut off from the sphere of outward action, this resolute quietude, this self-forgetful reticence, may well come to be the sole remaining scope for the exercise of will,—the entire

field of discipline for the graces of a faithful soul ; and to resign it is to give up the battle of which we are never to despair. Surely then it is not for us to go and tell every burden which God may lay upon us ; *that* were to refuse one half its weight, and to say we will not bear it unless it be lightened by help and pity. And when, in our impatient canvass for sympathy, we refuse the silent martyrdom, it will be found that we deceive ourselves and know not what we do. We only accept a precarious secondary support in place of the primary and unfailing ; for the mood which passes outward and flings the arms abroad for human contact cannot coexist with that which retires within and falls into the Eternal Love with the words “ I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” The one moves upon the sensitive plane of transient suffering ; the other loses itself in the abiding centre of spiritual repose ; and truly merges the natural weakness in supernatural strength. To one who can let his own will rise to the altitude of the Divine, the tumult of waves that seemed so tempestuous below subsides into a glorious expanse alive with chequered lights and purple shadows of the clouds. The blinding illusions of his personal position are taken up into the pulsations of a vision akin to the Omniscient. So long as the powers of thought and affection remain, this refuge is open to every sufferer, who, resting on God’s compassion, says, with a glance of secret prayer, “ I fly unto Thee to hide me.”

Conscious as we are that the very design and structure of our nature include a private chapel of retreat, we carry the same interpretation into our relations with others. There also we recognise an invisible element; with a tender wonder, if ever it makes a sign, yet standing reverently aloof from it, and asking no questions. This sense of what is between the lines of the legible narrative of life is indispensable to all humanizing and blending affections; and without it we should be driven asunder by hopeless repulsions. If we are forbearing and patient towards the wrong-doer, it is because we read the pleadings of his temptation, feel for the tremblings of his will, and believe the seeming in him to be darker than the real. If we place in another a deeper trust than is yet warranted by the measure of his realized character and achievements, it is because something in him suggests a silent reserve of moral power whence noble results are accustomed to spring. And if we meet with one whom we suspect to be bearing a secret cross, but who flags under no duty, and mingles with the bright play of happier lives, is it not with an enthusiasm of honour that we see him consuming his own smoke and even turning it into flame? On the other hand, none can win from us so small a share of sympathy as those who talk all round about their heavy trials, and make every comer the confidant of all their complaints and tears. Our pity for them is elevated by no reverence; is even spoiled

by a grievous sense that the too voluble tongue is every moment betraying a divine confidence. When once we are compelled to feel that there is nothing behind the audible voice, the visible eye, and the surface of experience exposed to view, all grave and trustful affection,—all the deeper homage of the heart,—is gone. All spiritual strength for ourselves, all noble ties to one another, have their real source in that inner sanctuary where God denies his lonely audience to none. Its secrets are holy; its asylum, inviolate; its consolations, sure; and all are open to the simple heart-word, “Thou art my hiding-place.”

## XVIII.

### The Spiritual Charity of Christendom.

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LUKE xiv. 21.

“Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the lame, and the blind.”

So that nameless, perhaps imaginary “city” was already just like ours, and hid away its misery behind its splendour; and if you wanted to find its crowd of indigent and stricken, you had to dive into the lanes, and *seek* that you might save it. And, in the ancient cities, the quarters over which the needy or servile population spread were larger probably than in ours, and often the contrasts greater between their spacious mansions and their nests of poverty. Look at the map of old Athens, Corinth, or Rome: within the thin line that traces the walls run two or three converging roads, joining, like scanty islands in a sea of space, a temple, a courthouse, a gymnasium, a circus, a bath, a cluster of palaces; leaving blank enough to shade every slope as in the open country. What stood upon those vast areas which the engraver cannot fill?—the forgotten

multitudes that leave no monument ; who are born, and suffer, and die, without the notice of history ; but who are, collectively, at every moment, the largest holders in the great fund of human existence. When I try to fill up these silent blanks with the tones and looks of their lost life, and think of their tragedies of grief and passion on which the curtain never falls ; when I count the generations that inherit the woes of one metropolis ; when I remember how many are the vanished cities of the world, and the sores of those that yet remain ; I understand too well the deep pity of the saviours of humanity, and look with wondering reverence at their faith and hope rather than their charity.

One difference, however, there is between the ancient and the modern civilization, to which the ruins of Greek and Roman cities bear striking witness. As every great sentiment of the human mind shapes itself into expression in some form of art, it is fair to infer that a passion which has left no durable memorial,—which is neither heard in the song nor seen in the marble or the bronze, cannot have wielded any great power. In measuring the Art of a people, you find the proportions of their nature ; for precisely here it is that the mind transcends the rule of mere utility, and works to the scale, not of any outward need, but of an inward affection that must come forth ; and the deeper and more durable the feeling, the less perishable are the monuments it creates. What then are the remains which you can study in the

land of the Cæsars or the Ptolemies? The first obvious fact is, that the buildings devoted to the convenience of the body are for the most part gone; while those that represent ideas of the mind are standing yet. The provisions for shelter, the places of traffic, the treasuries of wealth, the home of domestic life, (except where preserved, as in Pompeii, beneath the ashes of a volcano,) have crumbled into the dust with the generations that filled them once. But the temple, answering to the sense of the Infinite and Holy; the rock-hewn sepulchre, where love and mystery blended into a twilight of surmise; the column or the bust of civic praise, grateful for service to the commonwealth;—these survive the shocks of war and the waste of centuries, and testify that religion, love, and honour for the good are inextinguishable.

But a second fact becomes obvious, the moment you imagine the same test applied to any great city of the modern world. Suppose the ages to have done their work on this metropolis, and buried all but its most durable remains; and walk over the site in fancy, to think what you would find. There are the same great monuments of our humanity, repeated still;—the cathedral, where the living knelt by the stone figures of their fathers; the courts, dedicated to the just and right; the halls of legislation, for harmonizing the law and the conscience of the people; the marble records of genius and virtue, cut with the graver of a nation's



grief and pride ; all these are there, to attest the sameness of our nature in every age. But in the midst of them you discover vestiges to which Greece and Rome present no parallel. “Here,” your guide would say, “was a school for orphans,—there, a refuge for pensioned age ; this enclosure was the retreat of the insane ; to this theatre the workmen came to hear or read, when the day was over ; and behind this portico was the infirmary for the cure of accident and disease.” Here then we have a new sentiment,—of sympathy with defective and suffering humanity, which in heathendom has left, so far as I know, not one memorial of itself ; and which now vies, in the solidity of its creations, with the most ancient passions of the soul. To conceive aright of the social condition of the old Pagan world, you must fancy all our institutions emptied of their inmates ; must turn loose from the asylum the maniac and the idiot ; cast forth the blind and dumb upon the public ways ; throw from the hospitals the fevered and the fractured, on the chance of care in the cabin of the slave ; and you must think of this, not as it would be now in a land where the private sympathies are alive which have called up public institutions, but on a soil so barren of the charities as to have bequeathed no enduring trace of their existence.

And as there are no monuments of the humanities from the old world, so neither does its history present the peculiar type of character which is moulded by their

predominance. Of private virtue, of public justice, of patriotic self-sacrifice, even of martyrdom to truth, there is no want of ancient examples : but who can show me anything like the Christian's pity, which he calls the "love of souls,"—his sense of the infinite worth there is in man,—his sigh for what he ought to be, his grief for what he is ; his faith that the meanest is but the highest in the germ ; his vow to lift every burden from the lot, to clear every film from the mind, that makes his poor brother seem less than a son of God ? It is a curious question, what became of those in the heathen world who were formed in the mould and tempered of the clay from which God fashions the apostles of charity in Christendom. It is hard to conceive that there were none ; for no sooner had the spirit of humanity been embodied in Christ and flung its appeal over the world, than the answer showed how congenial it was : as if by magic, the missionary, the almoner, the prophet appeared : a new moral and spiritual dialect burst into blossom ; the hymn, the communion, the funeral rite, the training of the young, the treatment of the lapsed, all passionately breathed the feeling of human brotherhood and unity before God : so that the elements were all there which, on the appointed signal, sprang into this joyful consciousness. Where then were the Fénétons and Oberlins, the Howards and Clarksons, —where the devoted women, such as Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale,—where the pitying apostles,

like Xavier and Wesley, in the old Pagan world? Shall we say they are a new creation, and were not there at all? that the mind of saintly love is a birth of the Spirit, and its hour had not yet come? Rather let us say that they were there, but had not found their soul; and so were not drawn deep into the soul and life of others; that the sleeping possibilities were present, but waited for the morning light, to start from their unconsciousness; that the blind tendencies to higher and larger life spent themselves in dreams, for want of faith to become real;—a signal example how conscience, once unsealed, not only discovers what was hid, but creates a world that was not.

An observer who knew nothing of Christianity, and who noticed its constant resistance, wherever its spirit was freshly awakened, to everything degrading and disorderly in life,—how it sweeps the noisome dungeon,—decently replaces the rags of wretchedness,—trims the miner's garden and brings light into his cottage,—attends to the ways of speech, and even shapes the coat, the gown, the cap,—might easily mistake its theory of the world. He might well say to himself, "Here is a religion that makes much of the outward lot of men, and attaches a special sacredness to the body and all its ways: it is ever on the watch against the physical ills: its chief suffering is disease; its chief virtue, cleanliness; its chief terror, death. It plainly labours at this mortal life as all in all, and out of the mere

natural laws extracts what sanctity it can." To his amazement he would learn that this conjecture precisely reverses the fact. If there be any defect in Christianity, it is that it passes nature entirely by, and deals exclusively with objects above and beyond her sphere ;—God, the Infinite Spirit, who would be there though the earth and heaven were not ; the Soul of man, which will live on when the body falls ; Christ, whose function was to set these two face to face, and leave them alone with one another, hindered by no world between. If ever there was a religion which, in its essential features, put a slight upon outward things and laws, and offered to dispense with the kosmos, and, instead of perishing in the convulsion, would become simpler and sublimer than before, it is the Christian. And it is in this very characteristic,—which is in truth a reaction from the nature-worship of the surrounding world,—that all its compassionate depths and its minute tenderness are really found.

For, when it conceives all the great problems of life as embraced in one, viz. how to fall into harmony with God, it directly places every mind in divine relations, attributes to it divine susceptibilities, and expects from it some gleams at least of a divine history. It makes high and ideal demands on each disciple,—to know himself, to feel his distance and deplore his exile from his proper home, to humble himself in prayer for restoration, to yield up his lower will, and follow the

delivering love which will take him home. In its appeal for this conversion,—in assuming this experience to be not possible only but indispensable, it sheds upon men an honour, as well as a compassion, which lifts the meanest from the dust. In one sense, no doubt, it scorns circumstance, and, possessed by its spiritual end, never asks whether it be Lazarus or Dives, bond or free, to whom its message goes: it looks right past all outward differences, that are but the masks of human souls, and pierces to the silence where they themselves lie hid. But when once they have been found,—nay, while as yet they are only sought and sighed for,—its missionary spirit resents whatever hurts, insults, degrades them, and longs to establish some decent harmony between the outer lot and the inner dignity of the sons of God. There must be some correspondence between the divine affinities and the secular surroundings of the soul: its heavenly future and its earthly present must not be in too hopeless contradiction. Is it fit that the child of the infinitely Pure should never escape the squalid cell and the putrefying steams? Shall the heir of a diviner world, where order and beauty are unmixed, be schooled for it amid only confusion and deformity? Shall one whom the great Taskmaster has charged with duty be the bondsman of another and not trusted with himself? Shall the disciple of Christ be unable to read his history, and know nothing of his place in the Providence

of the world, midway between the line of prophets and the fellowship of saints? And who can be called to worship "*in spirit and in truth*," unless his mind is redeemed from the darkness of neglect, and quickened into some power of thought and glow of affection? And so it comes to pass, that the spirituality of the Christian faith, if you say it is excessive, remedies itself. In working itself out, it descends from its height, and flows into the remotest recesses of the lower life. For, in truth, its exigencies are all-inclusive: it is impatient of every form of human ill, and presses in every direction towards nobler conditions of existence. To heal, to cleanse, to clothe, to lift, to free, to educate, all are inseparable incidents of true conversion, and have invariably clung to it as the shadow to the substance. Say what you will of the failures and errors of Christian enthusiasm, no zeal which you might deem more rational has done half as much for suffering humanity. When it has missed its own ends, it has reached others to which no colder zeal would ever have addressed itself. But for the Church, where would have been the School in Christendom? But for the missionary army, baffled and beaten as it has often been, where would the advancing lines of civilization have stood, which are everywhere reducing the barbarism of the world? But for the reverence felt for the souls of men, how long should we have had to wait for the various forms of pity and healing for the body? Chris-

tians may have attempted many foolish things: but who have effected more wise ones? They may have said too much of despising the world: but who have done more to render it habitable?

The Roman Catholic and the Protestant Christianity deal somewhat differently with the outward degradation and misery which stands in their way and seems to mock at the "honour due to all men." It is the difference between the priest and the prophet. The one approaches the sad scene in the spirit of Pity; the other, in the spirit of Faith; the one, to remedy the discord between the outer and the inner life *for* the poor sufferers; the other, to wake up the springs of higher action within them, that it may remedy itself; the one, to carry as a foreign gift, and set in the midst, a miraculous altar lamp, whose oil can never waste, and which no darkness can overpower; the other, to kindle in the living soul a divine light, which, as it spreads, shall become human too, and render the whole nature luminous, to purify and sweeten its own abode. Sometimes, no doubt, this bold appeal to the springs of conversion,—to the secret compunctions and deepest trusts of humanity,—will be in vain; for whether the Spirit goes forth in the whirlwind of a Whitefield's voice, or breathes in the low prayer of a sister of mercy, there will ever be some dull and helpless natures which no vibration can reach through the thick clay. For these, it may be, resort must be had to something like

the Catholic discipline, which treats them as children, who can only learn the sanctities by rote ; who must be trained in habits of obedient order before they are quickened by its spirit ; and led to imitate the goodness into which hereafter they shall be born. These natures, certainly, when you are sure that they are such, must be built up from without, and approached circuitously by improved regulation of their lot. To this extent,—within the field occupied by natures thus crusted over,—there is room and work for a benevolence simply secular and social. Only, we should not be in haste to despair of the higher awakening, but still hope against hope, and pray for the heart of unquenched faith and fearless love to deliver in due season the message of the spirit. Every crisis of religious awakening shows that if that message do but lay hold, here a little and there a little,—if it possess and purify a few scattered souls, and lift them from the crush and dust into the inner walk with God,—the redemption is not theirs alone : these few become witnesses, by their very presence, of things invisible and divine : their patience, their sweetness, their orderly ways, their self-possession and self-forgetfulness, draw other hearts around them with wonder and with love : they are as lights in the darkness amid which they live : they sustain the sense of higher possibilities ; and, as living symbols, attest a Presence of infinite purity through the dingy air and the jostling crowd. Every reader of philanthropic



biography knows that if once, among the poorest, the living springs of religion are touched, and a family becomes God-fearing, a transformation forthwith sets in: the rags disappear; the furniture returns; the crowding mends and becomes decently manageable; the sickness abates; the children brighten; the quarrels cease; the hard times are tided over better than before; and sorrow, once dull and sullen, is alive with hope and trust. But if the beginning is made from the other end,—if you start with emendation of the outward condition alone, and trust to the apostolate of the health-inspector or even the school-teacher, you will no doubt be able to sweep the streets, to improve the dwellings, to consume the smoke, of all your towns, and to sharpen the wits of the people that live there: but there will be this difference from the former case; that each end which you gain will stop where you take it, and as soon as you leave it, will begin to go back: all reforming movement will be uphill, borne with heavy resistance to its due altitude, and, the moment the retaining tension is checked, descending as a rolling stone: you must continue to supply the power; for you have created none, but only fitted up aright the scene which it ought to occupy. And if the first gain is not even self-sustaining, still less will it carry itself spontaneously forward to a second. The cleansed body does not secure the instructed mind; or the instructed mind, the provident will; or the provident will, the brave and

patient temper ; or the brave and patient temper, the pure and reverent heart. The sweetened air will protest in vain against the fumes of riot and excess ; and your model cottages can be furnished with no lightning-conductors to carry off the storms of passion that may rage within them. On this method, therefore, of attacking the evils of society piecemeal, and from the outside, you are surrounded by enemies, and have to present a distinct front and enroll a fresh army against each. Step by step, you have to build up the ruined human nature from below, by separate effort and new instrumentality. This is a task which, I firmly believe, will be found to overstrain and baffle the secular resources of the strongest State ; and unless there shall remain or arise among us some religious inspiration, true and penetrating enough to carry home its appeal from above into the waiting hearts of men, and in the spirit of divine affection stoop to the lowest want while ministering to the highest, and stir with its persuasion the hidden shame, the secret demand for moral order, the slumbering sense of God, which are already pleading for a nobler life, and so to touch every spring of improvement at once ; I know not how any thoughtful observer, moderately acquainted with the history of nations, can contemplate without dismay the approaching future of our European civilization.

But are we not, it is said, fast dissipating our ignorances, and by our school-system letting in the

light into the darkest places, and giving all men the benefit of their own faculties? and is it not true that "Knowledge is power"? Yes, knowledge is power *over Nature*; but it is not power *over ourselves*. It arms our desires with new resources; but these desires themselves it leaves to their own play. It intensifies the speed and momentum of the will, but secures to it no better direction. Superstition itself records no vainer reliance than the trust in intellectual culture as an adequate antagonist or controller to the passions and impulses which are the dynamics of our nature, and in their adjustment constitute *character*. Alas! what advantage in moral elevation can the so-called "educated classes" of our people justly claim? Do low temptations lay hopeless siege to our "seats of learning," and leave the field? Does the Muse always breathe her sweetness into the poet's temper, or even her native purity into his song? Will commerce with the stars secure an escape from clouds of earth-born passion into a divine serenity? Is science undisturbed by jealousies, and literature by mean traffic in ideas? Is theft confined to the petty larcenies of the street Arab? and homicide to the baffled burglar? Or, are frauds the most deliberate and heartless,—the systematic imposture of adulterated goods,—even cold-blooded murder by false insurance of rotten ships, not unknown to modern mercantile grandees? And this is consistent with all the lessons of the Past. When the Greeks,

the most intellectual people of the ancient world, lost their brilliant place through festering corruption; when the Romans, the strongest and most law-loving, found their empire cave in for want of inward moral tension in its matchless material and military organization; when, amid the decay of that vast civilization, a fresh creative life burst forth and spread, not from the courts and schools and libraries and observatories, but from the illiterate synagogue and the fanatical Jew; when, again and again, the law has been made clear that social degeneration descends from the ornamental ranks, while social regeneration ascends from the despised; it does seem a strange illusion to seek redemption from our ills on the side of mental culture. No; it is in the spiritual capacities of man that the true counterpoise is to be found to the stormy forces of his impulses and passions. The voice which can speak to these can alone carry him out of himself, and invest him with diviner powers; introducing him to a new life of reverence, which calms the eagerness of self-interest and desire, and gives an unknown meaning and depth to every pure affection and generous duty. And not only has the religious new-birth this feature, of commanding the total nature of the individual in all its dimensions at once: it is further the great equalizing and uniting power which overleaps all secondary distinctions, and blends innumerable souls into one choral symphony; lifting all to the level of one impartial

standard of inward goodness, and casting all down in trustful worship of one Living and Infinite Perfection. They who “bring in hither,”—to this sublime homage, —“the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind,” shall not only have place, for us, among the lights of the moral firmament, but, as “turning many to righteousness,” shall “shine as the stars for ever and ever.”

## XIX.

### The Rock that is higher.



PSALM lxi. 2.

“Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.”

It was perhaps some outward calamity that wrung this prayer from the Psalmist. Be it what it may,—loss, sorrow, even remorse,—it brought him redemption from a more grievous ill,—the burden of *himself*. By the very tone of his strain you may know, without seeing him, that his face is turned upward. He has found that there is a “*higher than he*”; a *too high* for him; a rock he cannot *climb of himself*; yet whither he must *be led*, if ever he is to have peace again. These are great discoveries; very simple indeed, but very deep; short, no doubt, of the full insight of the Christian mind; yet beyond the temper of many a professed disciple. Those who feel *nothing higher* than themselves, who live upon the level and see the world upon the same, who have prudence in their own affairs, humanity for others, but reverence for none, are hardly in place, you would say, on the pavement where Chris-

tians kneel. Yet who can doubt that the class is far from being small? Not that any one would deliberately maintain, or consciously think, himself to be above the attitude of dependence and aspiration. But how few there are in these days whose life seems to *set* into that attitude,—whose eyes seem to carry a look beyond, whose features tell you that they watch and wait,—in whose moral deportment there is a leaning upon strength other than their own. How many, in whom the bold face, the glib tongue, the empty self-content, the tone of light banter or perpetual criticism, show that they feel themselves in the presence of no Higher! Nor is it only in careless hours, when the free play of nature is disengaged, that these signs appear of a spirit drawn to no deep worship. Duty itself, though in its very essence the service of a Law *above us*, is too often rendered, if not with the pride, at least with the isolated strength, of personal resolve; as though, lapsing, we should indeed fall into the hands of another; but, achieving, effect a work that is all our own. Nay, even in their religion, in the very act of renouncing themselves and passing into the Divine hand, men contrive to flatter their own complacency and mock with a counterfeit the altar of their God; not yielding themselves, but claiming him; not laying down their nothingness and sin before his almighty holiness, but using his infinitude to swell their littleness, and his redemption to cancel the shame of sin; proud, if they

be orthodox, of knowing him so well ; perhaps not less proud, if they be sceptics, of knowing him so little. So subtle is this clinging self-adhesion, that in order to divert attention and keep office, it will even denounce itself and call upon the world to aspire and mount. The cry of "*excelsior*" is corrupted into a cant ; and if you watch the upturned look of those who use it, it has often nothing to do with the eternal heavens, but is only wandering after the glittering bubbles of their own vanity.

Inveterate however as may be this chronic sin of our humanity, the grace of God has not assailed it quite in vain. Christendom is broadly distinguished from the Greek and Roman world by its spirit of intenser aspiration,—its inability to repose upon the present and finite, as if that were all,—its constant search, behind the veil, for the perfection only hinted by the tracings thrown upon the eye. Its art, its piety, its moral life, hardly less than its worship, have betrayed the sense of a world transcending experience,—an archetypal excellence that leaves all our achievements deep in shade. A heathen Raffaele, or Beethoven, or Tennyson, are on no terms presentable to the imagination. York Minster would lose its meaning in Athens. And of all the great ancients whom one could place in fancy among the hearers of Tauler or Leighton or Pascal or Hare, Plato is the only one in whom the light would find entrance, and the marvellous tones would re-



awaken native strains. In Christian times the physical universe itself has worn a different aspect: it has passed from the *All* into the *Part*; from reality to symbol; from opaque to transparent; from the brilliant palace of the senses, to the mystic temple of the soul. As one of the embodiments of the Divine Word, it bears in every part a depth of meaning which comes out as our eye is purified to read it, but which, the more it appears, leaves yet the more behind. And the penitential tone of all Christian devotion bears witness to the conscious depth of the moral life,—to the beauty of God's holiness that makes a blot of our saintliest light ("beholding the moon and it shineth not"). In all things, the sense of *short-coming* has pervaded the consciousness of modern times, and evinced the different standard applied as the measure of the world. Notwithstanding drowsy periods and unfaithful men, a certain inability comes back upon us to be reconciled with our guilty selves or a guilty world around us: the evil startles us with new surprise and we fling our protest against it once more; or if the old have been used to it too long for this, the young bring to it a fresh soul and see it as it is, and put it again to shame. Permanent acquiescence in deformity, failure and sin, our Leader of faith,—that tempted yet holy Son of God,—has rendered impossible for us. He has made us aware how little this is the real meaning of things; how far different is the Divine thought of the world

from so deplorable a fact. He has hinted to us of a "Kingdom of God," and bid us pray that it may "come";—and, however dimly and interruptedly, the vision will not cease to haunt us, and refuse us rest, of a life more genial than ours to God's holy Spirit, and of a world more like the abode of a reconciled nature and an immortal race.

In whatever form this sigh after a better life appears, it is assuredly preferable to the easy indolence which is blind to every higher conception. In any case it contains an element of "noble discontent." It expresses at the least an unsundered faith that the world *ought to be* what it is not; it shows that the heart is yet capable of thinking, of privately loving, of transiently believing, something purer and greater than its own experience. So far this is well. But if this be all, the presence of the higher idea may bring to its possessor no power and no peace; nay, it may steep his whole soul in secret sadness, and put a plaintive tone into every deeper expression of his mind. To be gifted with the poet's eye that sees below the surface, to sympathize with the inner life that flows through the aspects of the air and light and sea, to read the tender and solemn meanings of our humanity, to overhear the sob of its conscience and the contrition of its prayer,—is but a tragic revelation, where it is a mere finer perception without clearer hope. If the deeper spirit which you discern in all is a baffled spirit that

cannot make its way ; if, like a dreamer in a waking crowd, it is jostled on every hand, and without footing on any highway of reality ; or if it is a fiction of your own, the creature of your mind, never in this universe at all until you put it there ; then indeed you have found a melancholy secret, at which a noble heart can never cease to grieve : you have discovered how much better the world would have been, if you had had the making of it ; how a crushing necessity kills out the higher possibilities that half gleam through ; how the human artist must stand helpless by, longing to insert the rich strains that float upon him, while the Divine hand scatters discords that destroy the theme. Whoever thinks that the actual is stronger than the ideal and is sure to put it out,—that the representations of conscience, pity, affection, are amiable infirmities, to which no fact will ever pay attention,—must either purchase his peace by the sacrifice of all religion, or retain his religion at the price of despair. And not of despair only, but of utter sickliness and unverity of nature ; for whoever lingers in dreams which *he understands to be dreams*, and, having lost through unbelief the dawn and sunset lights of reality, hides the darkened face of things with roseate clouds of his own creation, desecrates his gifts by divorcing his admirations from his faith.

But the constant presence of a *higher* before the mind need not produce this plaintive and melancholy

tone. On the contrary, it is the natural source of the freest and deepest joy,—a joy scarce known to the pathetic genius of our modern Christendom, but often bursting from the heart of Paul, and impressed on the earliest worship of the Church. Ere this can return to us, we must reflect again on the question, ‘What *are* these visions of a nobler world and of a holier life’? Are we right in supposing them mere dreams of ours,—the play of our imagination,—the flashing lights of our own electric thought,—that streak as shooting stars the midnight vault of sorrow and contemplation? If this be all, we may well put no trust in them; it would be a trust in *ourselves*. As transient phenomena of our nature, they have no force beyond our feebleness; they may pass across the theatre, with entrance on one side and exit on the other; and no more than any other thought do they offer guarantees of their realizing power. They belong to us, and share all the risks of our fluctuating will; embarked in our little skiff on the infinite deep that wrecks so many purposes, and before the shifting wind that brings home so few. This is the view from which all that poetic sadness comes; *seeing* a better, but without hope in it; seeing it as a mere *thought* without living concrete reality; as only a suggestion of a *better self* against a worse self. And from this way of thinking I cannot hope to detach you, if you have settled it with yourselves that God’s spirit lets you entirely alone,—that your mind sits

solitary and untouched, with a space all round securing it against Divine reach, and working exclusively by its own proper and personal activities. But if you allow any communion of his spirit with yours, if, after reserving the enclosure of your own personality, you will leave a margin of consciousness where his thoughts may be given for your thinking, his love for your sympathy, his authority for your revering, then I ask, in what experience of yours would you look for this holy intercourse, unless it be in the august revelations of conscience, and the unspeakable aspirations of affection? Are not these precisely what you recognise as *higher than you?* and higher than a *person*, no *thing*, no *phenomenon*, *nothing but a person* can be; so that your very consciousness testifies to a presence beyond it; and inasmuch as, on the awakening of conscience, you feel stripped of all rights except of simple obedience, and when touched by the vision of some saintly goodness, you are captive to it without title to resist, you know that he is personally there,—his eternal righteousness communing with you “to show you what is good.”

I often wonder whence can arise the marvellous incredulity of hard-minded men as to this permanent life of God in the soul of man? They do not, I presume, think of him as asleep, with *no* living action, no movement of affection, no whisper of righteousness, anywhere, nothing, in short, to distinguish his being

from his non-being. They mean his perfections to be regarded as awake, and having their functions in *some* sphere. *Where else* then can they suppose his life, his love, his grace, to be? where, if not in the most living, the most loving, the most gracious quickenings of the spiritual world? where, if not in the abodes of sin and sorrow, breathing on the embers, lest the spark of purer fires should die? Would you have him present through blank space, sleeping in the frosts of the midnight infinitude, and folded round the pointed stars? or interfused through the solid earth, or dissolved through the waters of the sea, or woven into the texture of the light?—would you own him amid these physical conditions, *doing* nothing, it may be, even there,—a mere *presence* and not a *life*? and will you deny him entrance to spirits that can respond to his, where like meets like, and the look of pity is answered by the eye of trust? Is there then no meaning in the promise, “We will come to him and *make our abode with him*”? Strange delusion! that we should see a dwelling for him in the lower,—the fabric of his material manufacture,—and none in the higher,—the spirits that are the image of himself. How much simpler and more true to our inmost experience, to own that though we may *mar* we do not *make* our own best inspirations; that they steal upon us like the dawning light, which the wakeful is the first to see and the faithful most quick to use, but which neither can

command to break in storm or glory. Yes ; *He* is the ground of all our good ; and all that we inadequately call our *ideals*, the inner experience that looks at us through the symbols of the universe, the better possibilities that seem ever to struggle through the material conditions of life, the contrite longing to be free from self and at peace with God,—these, while they are in us, yet are not of us ; they are not ours, but his ; nay, they are his very self ; first, standing at the door to knock, and then, if the latch be lifted by a hospitable hand, entering to abide and dwell, and turning the bread and wine of life into a sacrament. If this be so, if, in the solemn suspicions of conscience and in all suggestions that are “higher than” we, we have to do, not with fancies of our own, but with communicated holiness of his,—our whole attitude towards them must be changed. They are transferred from a human to a Divine seat,—from dreams of nature to realities above nature,—from flitting fictions to deeply-anchored facts. They are just the thoughts that stand at once in him and in us, secured from our uncertainty in his immutability ; and whether we heed and hold them or let them go, he still abides and is present with the same lights in an everlasting round of souls ; and, fail who may, his realizations are sure to be. Thus, in your noblest visions, you stand, not before your own quivering reflexion, but before the *eternal essences of things* ; there is offered to your hand

a divine and adamantine nucleus which will persevere through belief or unbelief of men,—the temple-stone which, however often rejected by the builders, shall none the less become the head of the corner. In comparison with this unwasting treasure which visits you *ideally* (as surely all holy spirit *must*) whatever you call *actual*,—the material products and human aspects of today, of yesterday, nay of all historic time,—must be pronounced transient and unreal. And hence, our common gauge or measure of reality is directly inverted by a mind of deeper and truer insight ; which rises into the belief that the palpable experiences, and established usages, and persistent guilt and wrong in which the wise of this world see the foundation of all, are doomed to evanescence ; while the sighs of the holy, the visions of the prophet, poet, and sage, the cries of martyred saints, ‘ O Lord ! how long ’ ?—represent the solidities of the universe and the eternal decrees of God.

This attitude of the soul, indeed, this personal recognition of God’s own thought and love in all that is above us and sanctifies us by a more transporting reverence, is the very essence of genuine *Faith*. Once habituated to it, we expect the fullest blossoming of all good and the withering away of evil, under faithful husbandry of “ the field of the world ” ; and in labouring for this end we feel sure that the irreversible current of time is with us, and, as it flows, waters the



hidden roots of every precious thing we tend. All our sickly feebleness which sits gazing at the better without lifting a finger to create it, or which, baffled by temporary defeat, lays down its arms, vanishes when it is no longer our own strength but that of the Everlasting Will on which we throw ourselves : perils, difficulties, the frowns and derision of men count no more, where the cause and the end are alike divine : if we are wounded in the strife, or fall in the midst, these are but incidents of victory. Surely this joy of faith better interprets the interval between what we are and what we ought to be than the dreary hypothesis of a fallen nature. "Ah yes," it used to be said ; "you have many fine dreams of what you would fain be, and of a world more free from guilt and woe than this : once they were true : they linger with us as witnesses of a better time : but you can make nothing of them now ; for your will is broken ; your life is cursed ; and of this it is that your vain sighs are intended to convince you." In this view all that is "higher than we" means only to reproach us with ruin, to attest a lost Past, to mark our decrepitude and keep alive our despair ; with the design, it is true, of driving us to an eternal Refuge and regaining a Paradise at last ; but only as a supernatural exception or sequel to a blighted humanity and a hopeless world. The ideal faculty of man thus becomes a retrospective vestige of forfeited possibilities, a monumental inscription over

the dust of lost genius and virtues, which he can only celebrate and cannot reproduce. How much simpler than this funereal fiction, how much more accordant with the evident ascent of things, is it to construe this great feature of our nature, not as a record but as a prophecy, not to weep over it as a shameful badge of perdition, but to have joy in it as a foregleam of redemption, the incipient "Christ in us, the hope of glory"! It is not an epitaph, but an annunciation! Who shall forbid us to hide the blessed prophecy in our hearts?

In springing up then from the sleepy conservatism of habit and launching forth upon our highest aspirations, we truly "cast ourselves upon the Lord," and touch the ground of firmest trust. And if this is the first grace, of Faith, so is it the second, of Hope, to look in the same spirit on the system of the world, and let its inner light of beauty and manifold voices of promise and of joy, give its fundamental meaning to our hearts; not indeed drowning its more pathetic tones, but taking them up and weaving them into a transcendent harmony of praise. And if then, with like temper of soul, we turn from the spectacle of nature to the persons of men, and passing beneath the surface of what they seem and say and do in the dust and strain and noise of the common day, read and believe the possibilities, perhaps consciously pressing, perhaps unconsciously waiting, within; if with these

we commune as with their real selves, and refuse to feel towards them or live with them as anything less ; we do but concentrate the faith, the hope, upon human life, and crown them with Charity. That this disposition, to credit each nature with all its evident meaning, to see in each character its true essence and idea, must deepen the dramatic interest of life, and give far more to admiration and love than they else would find, cannot be denied. But it does more. Even when death cuts off the very promise and possibility of goodness ere it is perceptibly fulfilled, and we have to follow to the grave those who have never emerged from the common-place, the imperfect, perhaps the lapsed and visibly sinful, still the light of this charity is not quenched. The more we have made distinction in living intercourse between the seeming and the real, the false and the true self, and dealt with the latter, and felt sure of it, in spite of its making no sign ; so much the more readily do we let the apparent form, the actual life, drop away as accidental, and disengage from it the permanent spiritual essence which, already invisible, will now first unfold its contents in other scenes. The image of our departed, conformed to the conditions of immortality, must ever be of their pure ideal being, towards which their characteristic thought and love and their deepest Will ultimately tended, when detaining infirmities should cling no more. And that image is already a living and finished presence, through all the

years of personal friendship, to him who reads each soul through the eye of Charity; and has only to undergo its divine transfiguration to remain with the overshadowed heart as a life-long light of consolation. That which dies from his sight is but the failure, the imperfection, the negation,—all that the true self did *not* mean; and not on these did his believing love ever fix: it looked past them as the transient limitation of a power and beauty reserved within, and only waiting for opportunity to bloom into unfading perfection.

Let then the counsels of prudence, with their measures graduated from the actual, be content with commanding the levels of expediency, where there is nothing “higher than we.” *There* they are our strength. But when we reach the upper altitudes of character, the life of conscience, of affection, of faith, all depends on our seeing that to which these counsels are blind, trusting what they distrust, and giving our hand to be led to heights which, as they reckon, we can never reach. Had we but the foot to climb with, it might be so; but if there be the wing wherewith to fly, and the wafting atmosphere to bear us, who knows that we may not alight on points that are out of sight from below. In this trust lies all your secret reserve of might. When the blessed Spirit that bloweth where it listeth visits you and stirs the plumage of the soul, seek no cowardly shelter from it, but fling yourself upon it, and, though

its sweep be awful, you shall be sustained. Only, do this, do all, not in presumptuous daring, but in divine submission; in dependence not on any strength that can be spent, but on the ever-living stay of all that trust in him.

## XX.

### The Place of Man in the Scale of Life.



MATTHEW xii. 12.

“How much then is a man better than a sheep !”

So spake Divine insight in its simplicity ; while human wisdom, in its abject conceit, has preferred to say “ All have one breath ; so that a man has *no* preeminence above a beast.” The Pseudo-Solomon, there is reason to apprehend, has still as many disciples in this matter as Christ ; and while some blandly propose to extend the eternal life to the cattle and the birds, and others include man among the beasts that perish, hardly any feel the true meaning of the Christian faith, *which proportions to the differences of nature the intervals of destination*. The whole tendency of modern knowledge and modern thought is unfavourable to that reverential estimate of the human soul, without which no faith, no hope, no holy form of truth, is possible. We have been taught to believe only in the Sciences of observation ; to scrutinize the universe which lies around us ; to group objects together which are alike in their look

and are penetrated by the same material laws ; to worship external *facts*, and demand them as a condition of every belief ; and to make our boast (a boast undeniably just) of the conquests won, by this method of experience, over the difficulties of nature and the obscurities of her laws. The triumphs of physical knowledge and the advancement of practical arts are fairly referred to this tendency ; but where it is permitted to become exclusive, it produces a state of mind unfavourable to moral enthusiasm and religious insight. It unfolds the observing and critical faculties, but depresses the reflective and creative. Its reliance is on the evidence of the senses ; it distrusts that of consciousness and spontaneous intuition. It listens only to testimony from without ; and treats as a dream every natural oracle within. God himself is held to be known, not because he is felt, not because he speaks with us and we are with him, but at most because, when electricity and heat and gravitation have done their utmost, he is still wanted as a residuary power. And man learns his own nature, not by the inspirations that kindle and the affections that glorify it, but by zoologically comparing it with that of the ape and the beaver, by tape measurements of skull and cubic estimates of brain. It follows, that he appears just so “ *much* better than the sheep,” as his facial angle is larger or he is cerebrally heavier, or otherwise possesses the external characters of a superior organic type.

Christ, I suppose, meant something more than this : no naturalist's difference between link and link of the animal creation can ever amount to the interval between a mortal and an immortal being : no finest fibre of nervous structure be spun into a thread of everlasting life : no glorious faith be founded on the demarcations between kind and kind. The analogy that unites the living tribes upon this earth will always be more striking to the eye than the differences that separate them ; and so long as man looks at himself as he looks at them, *i.e. externally*, he will only seem to *crown the series*, instead of standing divinely detached from it ; and, appearing but a little higher than the brutes instead of little lower than the angels, will rather expect to perish with the one than hope for the perpetuity of the other. But when he boldly confides in his self-knowledge, believes his sacred instincts, accepts his affections as they inspire him, and wields the free-will entrusted to him, he knows at once that he is separated, not by mere gradation, but by a virtual infinitude, from other races here ; that his characteristics transcend all their analogies, and place him quite outside the whole natural series, to which only the form and accidents of his being properly belong. He is not so much of a different species from them, as beyond the classifications of species altogether.

In truth, the distinctions of species can have no place in the realm of moral and spiritual being. They



stop at the boundary of natural history. They depend upon a collection of external and physical features of definite and measurable nature, such as the relation of bodily organs, the duration of life, the descent from the same parentage; and cannot intrude among the higher attributes by which soul differs from soul. *There*, in every rank, on earth or in heaven, of angels or of men, one divine Law of right and wrong, one guiding truth, one binding Justice, one beauty of Holiness, reveals itself to all; and the Reason which discerns, the Conscience which feels, the Love which embraces these, must be the same in all. The difference is only in clearness and intensity of degree, not in any speciality of kind; in immediate condition, not in ultimate capacity: in stage of development, not in the goal of attainment. If God's goodness be of like nature with ours (and how else could it be imitable by us?); if his wisdom be the absence and the opposite of our darkness and our doubts; if his sanctity be the infinite realization of our finite ideals; then are even his perfections but the fulfilment of our tendencies: we are not, like the creatures, his *fabric* merely, but his *children* too; repeating his nature in ourselves; and, as in Adam we belong to the highest animal species, so in him are we assigned to the great godlike kind within which all are one family in every world. It is upon the true appreciation of this human peculiarity that, in its ultimate depths, all religious faith reposes. Once lose

sight of it, and begin to measure man by mere observation from without ; once trifle with your inner revelations and sink into mean scepticism of your finer insight into what is pure and good ; once condescend to doubt whether you have a soul, and yield to the repugnance with which, when shut in by the cloud of sensible experience, men hear talk of its intimations ; and whatever devout belief may remain to you is but the lazy lingering of lifeless tradition : its root is cut and its branch is withered. Pain, for example, and Death, looked at externally, are incident alike to the lower animals and to ourselves : regarded as phenomena in the history of sentient races, their aspect is the same to both ; and their different (even opposite) relation to our being and to theirs,—as discipline and development to us, disorganization and extinction to them,—is apparent only to the inward eye of moral faith and spiritual wisdom. There are however obvious distinctions in the very constitution of human nature, which mark its religious significance, and justify the Christian estimate of its greatness in the sight of God.

There is one small fact, for instance, which speaks volumes as to the entirely different idea lying at the basis of the animal and of the human life. The creatures below us (with exceptions, doubtless, chiefly of those which have gained something from the companionship of man) *have no pity* : they hate the feeble, they persecute the wounded, they kill the dying of their

own kind. The mother bird will throw her sick young out of the nest, and the tiger's cub will desert the bleeding dam. No feeling among them provides a fitting nurse for pain. This feature is the more curious, when we compare it with the maternal instinct which everywhere protects and trains their helpless offspring. The eagle 'that stirreth up her nest and spreadeth abroad her wings, fluttering over her young, and taketh them up, bearing them on her plumage,' is the prophet's image of the tenderness of God; while the neglect or torture inflicted on the weak and injured seem almost fiendish. So long as *healthful and growing* natures need cherishing, so long as *hopeful* life is frail and feeble still, the gentle care, the motherly endurance, the defensive courage, are all there. But when anything is ugly and out of order, and the vital promise is worn and broken, there is no infirmary to give it rest, and the creatures are angry as if they were deceived. With man it is quite otherwise. Nothing appeals to him so strongly as the beseeching eye of conscious suffering, or the spectacle of unconscious danger and privation. The sight has power to find a tender place in selfish hearts, and kindle thought in careless minds, and add many a grace to rugged hands. Human Pity too flows *unconditionally* forth: it asks no promises, it makes no bargain with life, it demands no loveliness in its object. The parent's persevering care for an incapable child, the child's reverential watch

over a parent's infirmities, clearly show that, as hope declines, compassion deepens, and as the moans of sorrow rise, soothes them with a clearer and a sweeter strain. Before its power, even the last extremity of dreadful passion yields and dies away ; and wounded enemies taken in the fight are cared for with cost and pains. Can we doubt the meaning of this difference ? Is it not clear that among the lower creatures everything is subordinated to *life*, and everything weeded out that is against it ? while in man there is a distinct provision to meet the case of *suffering* ?

If so, then suffering can be no part of the intended scheme for them, yet must be distinctly contemplated as an element in our lot ;—an element too, not casual and exceptional, but, unless the medicine be wider than the malady, deliberate and universal. He who planted the germs of Pity in the human heart must have meant to leave the root of Sorrow in human life. He cannot have regarded it as an evil and unnatural growth, at variance with the ends of being, the mere sign of confusion and result of ruin. Of the pains to which other creatures are victims he ordains us to be lords. And the reason is plain. Suffering is always against *life* which is *their* essence ; but it is not against goodness and love, which are *ours*. No doubt in mean and selfish natures, it may simply eat into the health and corrode the spirits, and rust over the finer-tempered weapons of existence ; but in noble and faithful hearts

how often does it open fresh fountains of power, and pour them forth in purer self-forgetfulness! Not that there is any mysterious virtue in mere anguish passively received: the sensitive nature is the seat of no salvation. But every human affliction is the disappointment of some affection, the loss of some sweet custom, of some dear hope; and when that ground gives way beneath our feet, we gravitate to a lower, or we seize a higher; and the trial reveals what we are worth. Rarely but by some bitterness of sorrow are we roused to change the level on which we always tend to live, or made sensible of the vast range of objects that are open to our love. Quenching our compass-lights, it drives us to steer by the everlasting stars; and wonderfully wakes us to the waters as they rush and the heavens as they glide. Though no outward change may be visible, and the program of the day may be much the same, the very soul itself may be transformed; the deep expressiveness of things is now first opened to her: she sees more than brilliancy in the summer light, feels more than coolness in the evening breeze; discerns a secret drama in the common incidents of life, and beneath many an ordinary voice hears the "sad music of humanity." As night can be known only to those who have seen the day, and silence to them who have heard sound, so is life first revealed to the soul on looking into the realm of death, and God's dear presence found when finite claims and blessings fall away. Who then

will shrink from the shadow of the human cloud, whose local darkness betrays an infinite light? Who retreat, as if he were a creature sensitive alone? Welcome needful sorrow! first privilege of reason; highest problem of faith; welcome! deepest source of human love and most truthful expression of the Divine: lay us low beneath a Will better than our own; and keep fresh in our hearts the sanctities of the present and the sweet whispers of the future!

Another characteristic of the human being, as compared with other races, appears to be no less expressive. We are often told that our first parents are answerable for the introduction of death into the world, not only for their own descendants, but for all animated nature; so that moral causes would thus extend their agency into the realms of mere physical existence. Geology has long refuted this absurdity, by exhibiting to us innumerable vestiges of death pervading a vast series of ages before the appearance of man. It needed not however this refutation to show that of our partnership with other tribes in their mortality this superstition gives a false and inverted explanation. It is not that they die from sympathy with our moral nature, but that we die from sharing in their physical. The difference is great. Were the decree imposed, as an extinction, upon the *larger nature first*, it must include the entire annihilation of the smaller to which it spreads, and be the same event to both. But if applied

to the beings of *smaller nature first*, it goes no further than their limits ; and involves destruction to the larger only so far as the lesser type is comprised within them : the overlapping residue of higher powers is left open for better hope ; and the event is *not* the same to both.

Now consider only one undeniable distinction between man and other tribes. We may allow (to avoid needless discussions) that they, as well as he, have a sort of *mind* : they have a set of guiding instincts and affections, often indeed so refined and marvellous as to put our boasted reason to the blush. What however is the end towards which these propensities manifestly look ? Are they not an apparatus for perfecting, preserving, and replacing the animal organism which they occupy and wield ? To find and store the needful food, to discriminate the poison from the fruit, to spread the net for prey, to build or excavate some shelter from the storm, to seek defence in fleetness or in strength, to trace the course of migratory flight, to tend the young that shall remain when they are gone ; this is the circle of ends embraced by the instincts of the animal tribes. All these impulses and sagacities serve the exigencies of the bodily life which contains them : they exist for its sake ; and so constant is this rule, that, if ever the naturalist finds a new arrangement in the physiology of a creature, he looks for a new instinct to work it ; or a new instinct, for a special structural

want for it to subserve. The sole *use* then of the animal mind is found in the vital organization which it maintains ; and when that organization is worn out and breaks up in death, the end necessarily carries away the means, and the whole creature disappears. So long as this relation subsists between the faculties and the structure of a being,—the faculties being for the sake of the structure,—we shall feel death to be nothing less than extinction ; and if the relation is still found in man, neither philosophy nor revelation can resist the slow pressure of its negative weight.

Is it so then?—the additional powers of a human being,—the distinctions by which “a man is better than a sheep,”—are they simply an improved machinery for keeping the vital functions in order ? Does his superiority consist only in a more refined skill in the preparation of nourishment, ease, and safety?—in the use of fire for his food, clothing for his body, and the substitution of brick houses for straw nests ? If so, however clearly he may head the list of the mammalia, he is no nearer to the nature and life of God. But even the lowest estimate of the human characteristics bursts the limits of this description, and regards the body, not as the *object*, but as the *instrument* of the mind. A man is universally regarded as contemptible who spends his intelligence in nursing his health ; and as degraded, who yokes his rational thought and his moral knowledge to the service of his animal



appetites and passions. For him, the language of all nations recognises the duty of subordinating to higher ends the very tendencies which are held to constitute a perfect guidance to the brute. In him, even the lower and selfish desires escape from that relation to the body out of which they arise. The material civilization of a people is but a development of its hunger, thirst, and shivering; but when the simple voracity of the brute is transformed into the affluent desires of the merchant, and the instinct of animal self-protection has passed into the splendid passion of ambition, the primitive impulse has already forgotten its origin, and set up on its own account: it has assumed an intellectual character, and will freely sacrifice for its own ends ease and pleasure, and every element of animal well-being short of life itself. Even therefore on the very side of our nature where we most nearly resemble other tribes, that relation between the body and the mind which was hitherto observed undergoes a manifest *inversion*. And the higher you mount in the scale of human characteristics, the more does this fact clear itself of all ambiguity. The sentiment of *Beauty* and the sense of *Wonder*,—do they feed and clothe us? What corporeal want do they supply? In what respect are we more perfect, as organised beings, for possessing them? As the sources of Art, the inspirers of Song, the springs of Science, the conquerors of Knowledge, the illuminators of Faith, they give the grandeur and

the lustre to our being ; but throughout their range they transcend the conditions of animal perfection.

Compare the life of Sense with the life of Thought in one particular only, their relations to Time and Space. A marvellous instinct enables each tribe of creatures to make provision for the exigencies of themselves or of their offspring many a week or month in advance ; yet of the future for which they are taught to act they have no power to think : they conform to it without knowing it. They are punctual as the moon ; yet have no watch and no calendar to go by. They are born, and grow, and pass away, but cannot even count their days or years, and are always approaching death without being aware of it. Events that are gone, events that are to come, tell upon their feeling and behaviour ; but for that purpose are run down into the momentary consciousness, and give them no escape from their imprisonment in the present. With us, on the other hand, so habitual is the outlook before and after, so far-fetched are the deepest interests which successively engage us, that there scarcely is such a thing possible as a mere immediate perception, or concentration in the instant which is with us : the affection of every moment is chiefly and consciously made up of knowledge and memory from the past, of imagination and beliefs of the future. Other creatures demean themselves as if they were the first of their kind, and, when once able to shift for themselves, take no notice

of their parentage; and this erasure of a superseded experience, this heedless flashing energy, is adequate to all the ends of a sentient and instinctive existence. But who can measure the interval between the birds that build in the churchyard elms, and the groups that appear round the churchyard graves, and have inscribed the churchyard records? Nor is it only through the memory of sorrow that human death enters with large power into the story of human life. It is not the vanished forms of contemporaries only that quicken and sweeten our affections; but from the distance of centuries and millenniums, priceless influences descend upon us through the monuments of historic greatness. The conscious relation between minds so severed, the transmission of thought through periods so vast, the returning flash of admiration and gratitude from the student of today to the Athens of Pericles, are marks of a nature not tied to the homestead of one generation, but cosmopolitan in time. If the future does not come home to us with influence as great, it is only because it is the region, in human affairs, of the possible not yet made actual: but, had we prophecy as rich as history and literature, there would be no difference; our faculty is ready to throw itself indefinitely forward as well as backward; nor is there any field of duration which thought and love and hope decline to occupy. What means this refusal to be shut up between birth and death? this conscious measurement

of the steps between them? this indefinite expansion of mind beyond them? There must be some congruity between the range of faculty and its destination; and an intellectual interest in unlimited time would be out of character in those who had no concern with it.

With equal eagerness does human wonder force the bars of its local dwelling and press into the other infinitude,—of Space; gaining room in it for an intelligence entirely unique. The insect may build its cell with angles mathematically exact: the thirsty deer may thread his way through the forest to the torrent whose flow he hears; led on from step to step of perception, without problems and without map. But what resemblance has such conformity with unknown relations to the sublime geometry, on the lines of which, from his small base, the astronomer pushes his survey through the skies? As well compare the dog baying at the moon with Newton who weighs it, and lays down its curve, and hangs upon it the terrestrial tides! Look through the open slit in that observatory dome, and see that small figure, watching through the night, with eye upon the tube, and ear intent upon the ticking clock, and thought among constellations that give no parallax: what is the fascination that holds him to that silent vigil, and makes it more congenial to him than the voices and fervours of the day? To what order of being is this interest in the contents and

phenomena of remotest space appropriate? Not, I should say, to any variety of tailless ape. Unless we must forego all proportion between the scale of knowing and the scale of being, the former must serve as some index to the latter; and to seek and think the infinite is to have a nature that is not all finite.

And when we turn to the *Moral consciousness* which is the crowning feature of our nature, we find still clearer indications of the prospective and rudimentary character of the present life. Animal impulse perishes in the using; clears off and is done with, making way for the next that shall turn up and take possession; so that the life of which it disposes divides itself into steps, which are always completing themselves and leave no arrears. Be it short or be it long, it is finished up to date; and when death comes there is nothing overdue. A responsible nature is differently made; not upon the momentary pattern, but upon the *continuous*. It has a *memory*, and preserves its past acts for a reckoning in the future, and holds them to be but halfway through their history till that reckoning has arrived. Conscience cannot forget; and if it carries a criminal secret, is so little able to bear the ill-deserts which have never been visited, that often, in order to force them to account, it will unbosom itself in confession after twenty or thirty years. Why does the sin thus refuse to die, long after it is physically worn out, and recuperative nature has seemingly healed and

covered over all the wounds? Why insist on non-escape, and actually tear open the oblivion which has swallowed up the ill? It is the infallible insight of the moral nature that "no time can run" against the eternal law, and that all seeming impunity is an illusion of which it is well to be quickly rid. The very conception of Duty contains the two inseparable facts of a choice offered to our freedom, and a corresponding treatment visited upon our choice; and to allow the obligation is to expect the retribution. How can we be bound to take the better and discard the worse, how can we know ourselves classed with the deserving in the one case, the undeserving in the other; and yet, when the probation is over, and our answer given in, the second half of the story be suppressed and no sequel arise? Is the law of Righteousness solemnly set up in the hearts of men, and its awful alternatives announced; and then are proceedings quietly dropped, without leading to anything, and no notice taken of any difference except what we may institute among ourselves? A trust without a reckoning is a contradiction and a mockery; and as the reckoning most assuredly is not fulfilled in this life, it remains in reserve for ulterior and harmonizing scenes in the drama of our being. Wherever Conscience is, there must be the forecourt of existence; and a moral world cannot be final, unless it be everlasting. They that have borne their witness for God in evil times, that have gone with

his sanctities into penury and exile, that have had their tongue plucked out with the hot iron rather than shape it to a lie ;—have they indeed been swept away by the scorn of the wicked and the fool, never to reappear and lift up their heads into the light ? The less they ask for anything to repair their sufferings, the more must we in our hearts demand it for them ; thus far at least, —that their faithful choice be vindicated : that the truth they would not betray shall glow as the light and flow round them as an aureole ; that the righteousness which they would not sacrifice shall prove, as they deemed it, to be eternal, and to be the congenial and undying element of the souls susceptible of it.

These are not obscure features in our humanity. They give to history its chief glory, to private experience its most purifying element. In choice societies and in rare times, they blaze upon the open brow of life, as a hand-writing of God, legible to the interpreter versed in divine symbols, as a glorious prophecy of immortality. Whoever hides them by sin, blots out, as far as in him lies, the sublimest of human hopes. Whoever brings them to intenser brightness lifts off the darkest shadow from the human soul.

## XXI.

### The Child that needs no Conversion.

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MATTHEW xviii. 1-3.

“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

WE know nothing, as we could desire, of the subsequent career, either of the disciples who brought down so grave a rebuke, or of the child who attracted this memorable benediction. Whether Peter and the rest ever were “converted,” and became subjects of the kingdom which employed them as its heralds; whether the little child that needed no conversion retained his simple, wondering heart, or, too much reminded of his distinction by his mother’s talk, had the heavenward gate of his spirit, so wide open before the eye of Jesus, gradually closed, are matters hidden from our view. The change which Jesus demanded from his grown followers was harder, alas! than that which the world would urge upon the child. It is easy,—I will not say inevitable,—



to lose the early qualifications for discipleship ; difficult, —I will not say impossible,—to recover them when lost. The uplifted, listening look of our young days, the unclaimed mind beseeching you for truth,—the love so wise, the thought so deep from very artlessness, are cheated away, except from the rarest of beings, by the hard falsehoods of experience, and exchanged for lower moods in the whirl of interest or ambition. The trustful spirit, that feels in the beauty and goodness of things resistless reason to believe them real, accepts too soon the bribe of disappointment, goes over to the side of sceptic shrewdness, demands inordinate security ere it will confide in man or God, and dwells in the universe as if it were a pedlar's hall. The sagacity of the will supersedes the wisdom of the affections ; the habit of independent action, struggling to its feet, tramples on the capacity for dependence and obedience, till our manhood grows too stiff to bow the head ; the bargain of our pride is pushed beyond the limits of this world, and our competitions grow noisy, if not for the “ greatest ” place, at least for the reserved seats, in the kingdom of heaven. ‘ Greatest in the kingdom of heaven ! ’ what a strange and fearful combination does the phrase present ! the comparative greatness of a man in the absolute empire of the Most High ! How little touched with the genuine temper of devotion, how narrow in the conception of its objects, must be the mind that could entertain the claim aloud and before the face of Jesus !

Let any man, not blind in eye or soul, go out into his field at night, and look up through the clear air, and uncover his head beneath that canopy of worlds, and by the swiftness of the shooting star measure the slowness of their eternity; and think whether he belongs to a realm in which *he* can covet to be greatest? Or let him quit his own particular life, and taking his station above the plain of history, watch the crowds that, far as eye can reach, have been ever crossing the open green, till lost in the passes of the boundary mountains; let him mark the costumes in which the human soul has made its apparition, and hearken to the tongues of every kindred in which it has told its tale; let him note the eager grouping of humanity around the tranquil forms of poet, prophet, saint, and sage, and listen to the unconscious harmony they make of beauty, thought, and prayer; and say, whether this is the host, now mingled with the congress of immortals, among which he claims to be greatest? Ah! what could he do, but shrink from the light of eyes so pure, and hold an awful peace? What, at most, but sit at the feet of their diviner wisdom, and reflect some glow of their holy fire? It is enough for him if he may live on at all; let him lie still in the Everlasting Hand, and take what God may send with trustful and unquestioning heart. He may feel assured, whoever he be, that any kingdom in which *he* could be greatest, can be no *kingdom of heaven*, but a very poor and earthly

place, though he picked for it the choicest planet of the skies. And if he does not know this, especially after hearing the voice of Jesus in his prayers, he is as far from the Christian in his religion, as he is less than the child in his simplicity.

Yet the disciples who coarsely disputed for the prime places in the universe, were honest, orthodox men; heartily possessed with the most devout traditions of their times; actually built into them; and ready at any moment to give up their fishing trade and tax-gathering for the theocracy. Nobody could say they were Pharisees, hypocrites, or sceptics: they held by the theology in which piety had stereotyped itself, and were sound, practical, historical believers. They had been instructed in the Scriptures from their youth; knew the commandments, and kept them; had their minds tintured with the rich colouring of the prophets, and their imagination filled with the image of perfect life and providential rule according to the approved type. To have doubted the Messianic advent and approaching triumph,—to have been puzzled or dismayed by the colossal power of Rome,—to have indulged misgivings at the sight of its lowering eagles, and fancied it more likely that they would slowly fall by the drooping of natural strength than suddenly drop by the flash of bursting doom, would have appeared to them a blaspheming anti-supernaturalism,—a refining away of the very substance of

Revelation. And as such, indeed, they do actually denounce it:—and if any one had predicted to them the very things which Providence has realized,—that fifty generations would pass away, and the harvests of eighteen hundred years be reaped, and yet Galilee be desolate and Jerusalem trodden down, and Messiah still in heaven, it cannot be doubted that they would have proclaimed him an infidel and put him to silence in the churches. In fact, the ambitious style of their expectations was never lost, and never revealed itself to them in its true character; and mingled with affectionate aspirations towards Jesus and sighings after departed friends, are fierce exultations of judgment, and a proud confidence of power and dignity, showing that the look of that little child, and of the form that bent over him in blessing, had left their conversion incomplete. And they have infected the Church ever after; filled it with a low talk of “glory,”—with odious dreams of “triumph,”—with shocking indifference to suffering; and so converted the most sublime of human expectations from a holy and ennobling trust into a gaudy and gigantic reflection of vanity and selfishness. They needed the Master still to reveal to them the spirit they were of: and we need him to recall us from the pernicious conceits of our theology to the childlike heart of our religion.

For, this incident appears to me to touch very nearly a question of great interest at all times,—of peculiar

interest in our own. What is the real difference between the mind of the child, and that of the disciples? May we not say, that the former was empty of traditional theology, and open to learn anything at the dictate of reverence; the latter, full of traditional theology, and prevented from unlearning by the influence of sanctified ambition? And does not their Lord say, that he will dispense with the theology for the sake of the fresh mind, rather than with the fresh mind for the sake of the theology? Nay, is not the stripping-off of acquired conceptions,—the clearance of custom and tuition,—the simple return to the untraced heart, described by him as in itself a heavenly conversion? as if, when the texture were untwined to take the false pattern out, the first filaments we had bound by our artificial pains would be found to have a vital force, and if we killed them not, would grow into forms most fair. Here, then, the question is at least approached, whether natural reverence should be permitted to use and correct tradition; or tradition must claim to educate and control the natural reverence; a question which the words of men almost invariably answer in one way, and the facts of God in another.

Religion, no doubt, springs up from the mutual agency of two causes,—an internal susceptibility, and external education. Without the concurrence of these it cannot exist. The mere capacity, however truly

inherent in the mind, remains latent under neglect, and, if it is to show itself, must feel the touch of human influence, like colours created by the light. And the mere instruction, however true and wise, addresses itself in vain to a nature empty of all divine faculty; it speaks with meaning only where there is the docility of aspiration. Both these conditions being indispensable, it would seem idle to discuss the question which of them is of the greater moment. Yet it is a question strictly practical. You find many a thoughtful man, who thinks lightly of all purposed discipline in religion; who trusts entirely to the sentiment rooted in every heart; who never doubts that it will work its way, without our guidance, to a true and noble faith; who seeks only to preserve the young mind pure from moral taint, and open to all truth, and then is content with the simplest doctrines of a natural piety, not elaborately taught, but rather assumed as the established language of the human soul. Others you find, who esteem it the height of enthusiasm to look for any religion except as the result of tuition; who deal with our nature not as ever tending towards it, but rather as repugnant to it; who never doubt that the whole faith of their child depends on them alone, being filled up from their lips, and wanting by their omission; who take religion, in short, to be a mere matter of testimony and knowledge, no less dependent on direct didactic influence than an acquaintance with

geography, or the memory of dates. Devout faith is regarded, in the one case, as a natural instinct ; in the other, as communicated history. Its seat, according to the former, is in the soul ; according to the latter, in the sacred books. The first would draw it forth from the human consciousness ; the second, from the gospel text. The one expects to find it in the nature of the affections ; the other proposes to form it there by art.

How often does it happen that our rival opinions are not the contradictories, but the complements of one another ! Remaining at angry variance, they exhibit the distortion of twofold error ; joining in partnership of truth, they present, with finished curve, the simplicity of wisdom. So is it in the opposite methods now before us. Place your exclusive dependence on the devout intuitions of the human mind ; treat it as the assured scene of a divine inspiration, on which no voice of guidance need be heard, since God will reveal himself in ways of his own ; and your pupil will go astray into mere vagueness and vacancy for want of a clear *object* of faith ; or will wander from worship to worship, like the blind devotee, groping with extended hands for the shrine he cannot clasp. With a spirit swelling with desires of service, he will meet no Lord to accept his vows, and to give him a divine shelter for his human obedience. His enthusiasm, his aspiration, his hope, wanting the starry centres of

attraction, dilute themselves through the upper heavens of his soul, and show only as faint nebulous lustre, moist and sad. His pressure of inward earnestness, his feelings of dependence, his gleaming thoughts of moral beauty and perfection, floating and unorganised, either dissipate themselves entirely with years, or they pass into the æsthetic embellishments of life. His religion becomes, I will not say the *poetry* of his existence, (for *that* it is to even saint and angel,) but its mere poetic *fiction* ;—poetry without faith,—tinting the outside, but not glorifying the whole dimensions of his nature. On the other hand, if you think only of the lesson you have to teach ; if you take it up, be it catechism or bible, in reliance on its infallibility, and assurance of its sacredness ; if you will take no counsel of the young heart listening to you, and can read there no unwritten sanctity more lasting than any legendary word of God ; if you press home upon his belief what is foreign to his love and reverence, and think the sweetness of his affections and the clearness of his conscience of less account than the dogmatic soundness of his creed ; you may indeed succeed, but in giving him his theology you have killed out his religion. Planting the overgrown stem of your own faith in this new soil, you have strained and withered up the root : better had it been to suffer the pruning, so unsightly to your eye ; for now wisdom may have to cut it to the ground, if perchance at the scent of water, felt as the



gathered dews of heaven, it may bud and put forth the branch of life again. A purely hereditary religion, delivered over as a mere historical product,—a venerable lesson by rote, taken in by the understanding, and never recast by the conscience and reproduced from the affections, remains an accretion on the habits, instead of growing into the living fibre of the soul and will. It takes its place among other prose realities and matter-of-fact recollections, which help out the conventional dignity of life, but rule it with no divine ascendancy. But in both these instances the evil lies in what you omit rather than in what you do. With impunity God will not be disowned *anywhere*. He is in the old Scriptures of prophets and apostles; he is also in the young child's heart; and if you will not bring the twofold voices of his Spirit into a harmony of love, but will urge the one to drown the other, you will but raise a discord or a sigh. Nor is that harmony difficult to establish. The natural mind, ere yet it has learned the lessons of low custom, is perceptive of all beauty and moral truth; and the materials of Christian instruction are rich with whatever can touch the highest consciousness, and fix the most earnest affections, of our nature. Let them but freely converse together. Fear not, nay, rejoice and be thankful, that the meditated sacrifice of Isaac,—the relentless bloodshed of Canaan,—the monstrous fate of Jonah—the shocking imprecations of David, shrink ashamed before the

incredulous purity and gentleness of the young heart ; and let its wonder and its love listen to the music of the parables, and cling to the side of Jesus in the storm-tossed boat, and look up in the face and hold the garment of the Galilean prophet, as he spake with voice now so terrible to Pharisees, now so tender to sorrow and to infancy.

But, you will ask, if the outward discipline and the inward sentiment of religion clash with one another, which is to give way? Are we to force our scriptural instructions upon the natural reverence, or to let them retreat before its resistance, and shape themselves according to its dictates? Is the aversion which we have sometimes to encounter from the unsophisticated heart to be dealt with as an ignorance which we must overcome, or as an insight from which we may learn? The answer to this enquiry will depend on the view we take of the human nature, and especially of the particular endowment which lays us open to religion. We may observe in ourselves one set of powers, entirely *passive*, which originate nothing, attempt nothing, tend to nothing, by themselves ; which depend wholly upon outward influence, and, until it is administered, remain in absolute sleep, and never betray themselves to our suspicions. Such are our five senses, of whose various feelings not the faintest dream could reach us beforehand ; which must wait in all docility for the teachings of experience ; which are, in fact, mere *susceptibilities*

to the physical stimulants around us. And as the eye does not become an organ of sense till light falls upon it, so does memory lie dormant till the materials of knowledge are supplied to it; there can no more be any *self-teaching* in this, than any *self-illumination* in that. But we are conscious also of another order of natural powers, which are not mere *capacities*, like these, but *operative faculties*,—energetic instincts, making themselves known by a spontaneous restlessness within us; urging us forwards into the scene by which we are surrounded, and impressing certain distinct lines of direction on the course which we tend to take across it. Such is the sense of beauty, which is not a deposit upon the soul of genius by passive exposure to beautiful things, such as any creature with eye and ear might have; but an irrepressible tendency springing from within, and determining the will upon the objects fitted to so high a passion; a vivid power, radiating, like light, from the mind's own centre to the circumference of nature, and kindling, as with rainbow touch, the things of earth or heaven on which it falls. It is needless to multiply illustrations of so plain a truth as that our nature is made up of passive susceptibilities and active propensities; and that we do not lie still to be merely written upon by the diligent casualties of the external world. To which class of powers, then, must we refer the sentiments of faith and worship which are the highest characteristic of man?—for on this

must greatly depend the education which we seek to give them. Is the mind simply *recipient* of religion, as the eye of light? If so, it is absolutely at the mercy of our external administration; and we have but to deliver the truth entrusted to us, receiving nought again: the susceptibility which we introduce into its proper element can create no new ray and can extinguish none, but can merely discern what others have discerned before; as the birds that fly over the fields today see what the first winged creatures saw in the grass of the new world. Or, is Religion rather a spontaneous element in human consciousness,—an instinctive wonder,—a prophetic watching of the full eye for light, so that God, when he comes, brings no surprise;—a solemn sense, ere yet there are words to speak it, of mingled law and love;—the natural leaning of the child upon the parent,—the pressure of the finite towards the infinite,—the secret attraction of reason to its uncreated Source? If so, if it belongs to those original tendencies which are endowed with power to feel their way of discovery to their rightful objects, then the work is not all ours: we are but the occasion, and heaven's own touch the guide. Then it behoves you to stand aside, and watch where the intuition alights; to restrain the sacred dove of the affections no longer in your narrow cage, but let it loose in the open skies, and see whither it beckons you away. Whoever can doubt that this is the lesson in accordance

with the truth must, I think, be misled by a false philosophy, or deluded by a falser experience. Religion is more than an artificial product of mental instruction: it is the prayer of conscience, the vaticination of reason, the natural faith of love; it is ever waiting to burst into consciousness, and to spring upwards when occasion shall allow. It is a fire kindled on the altar, ere yet the sacrifice is found. And this is just the truth which Jesus sanctioned, when he chose the heart of childhood as the most open seat of the kingdom of heaven; and told us that even while we teach to it our theology, we must re-learn from it our religion. There best may we meet again the fresh and genuine reverence which quiets passion; the awe-struck heart on which ambition sleeps and dies; which never asks to be greatest, never fears to be least; which seeks no privilege but that of belonging unto God; which resigns every claim but that of loving the hand that holds it whether with the gentleness of shelter or the pressure of a wholesome severity; and dwells in life, like the infant prophet in the temple, with the ever-listening will, thinking, though only with silent words, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth thee."

## XXII.

### The Goodness which may be taught.

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JOB xxxii. 8.

“There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Lord hath given him understanding.”

FOUR centuries before the nativity of Christ, the most enlightened city of the world put to death, as a blasphemer against the gods, a philosopher who supported the tenet that *virtue could be taught*. Twenty-two centuries have since elapsed; but the spirit of that heathen community still survives in this Christian land, and to this hour denounces it as a heresy, if we say that moral goodness can find entrance or security through the intellect. We are frequently warned against the danger of trusting for the improvement of a people to the mere advancement of their intelligence: we are reminded of the efficacy of a simple unquestioning faith to produce a life of holy order and humility; and invited to compare with this the innumerable instances of acute wickedness and polite demoralisation. It was no dulness, no want of accomplished faculty, it

is said, that corrupted the character and dissolved the life of ancient Athens. When Roman literature began to flourish, her pristine virtues were on the decline. And the brilliant centres of modern civilization are distinguished by no corresponding refinement of conscience. Nor is it consistent, it is added, with what we know of human nature, to expect reformation of manners from fertility of ideas. The passions, not being the accidental product of ignorance, are not likely to be cast out by instruction: their force, like that of gravitation, persistent by night or day, will make itself felt alike through mental spaces solid with darkness or gorgeous with the sun. It is hardly surprising then if there is as large a proportion of lazy, fraudulent, selfish, and dissipated men among the educated as among the uneducated classes. The law and the love of God being no matter for sharp-sighted discovery, but for simple acceptance, it is contended that the understanding should keep at a distance from them, and let them come in direct upon the word of scripture or the church. Happily, we have an historical and documentary religion, which, embodied as it is in a Bible, cannot be approached except through the alphabet, or apprehended without some effort of thought to reproduce the distant and the past: and this circumstance alone suffices to enlist a certain amount of Christian zeal in the service of elementary instruction. But beyond this it must be confessed that all active

direction of thought on the great principles of faith and duty, and therefore the very impulse of wonder and curiosity itself, in its higher applications, have been prevailingly discouraged by the recognized guardians of European Christendom. They have professedly addressed themselves, in their educational efforts, to the noblest wants and capacities of human nature,—those which place us in relation to divine things; but, from low and technical conceptions of religion, have demanded for its sake only the poorest beginnings of knowledge, and have applied it rather as a narrowing limit than as a generous inspiration, to the mental culture of their disciples. In short, no more humiliating descent is to be found, than from the lofty principle to the poor performance of the ecclesiastical part of the English school system. Starting from the sublimest ambition to make the soul at home with holy things, it often terminates without mastering the elements of earthly knowledge; and Religion, which includes all truth, as God includes the universe,—which brings to us its form shaped by the pressure of three thousand years, and its spirit in the problems and aspirations of the hour,—which takes the tone of poetry, of law, of philosophy, of love, of art,—which is the inner colour of all our earnest work and the blossom of all our thought,—within which the largest science may build its nest, as the bird within the forest depths,—which gives the meaning and the soul to life, making the



present the focus of the past and future, and turning evil and sorrow into faith and hope and charity ;—this august influence, which should set our nature on fire, is made the plea for damping down its noblest faculties,—for enfeebling their action by a formal discipline, shaving the crown of their aspirations to the monkish tonsure, and putting on their limbs the prison-dress of the parish catechism.

The natural consequence has been, a reaction into the inverted doctrine of mere secularism in education ; which, for the sake of gaining what is higher in immediate result, takes up with what is lower in fundamental principle. Looking aside from the diviner relations of man, and professing to regard him only in his industrial and political aspect, the advocates of this scheme measure his intellectual wants by the standard of his visible social necessities ; and by this rule, it must be admitted, they spring at once ahead of the most liberal demands for knowledge made by the sects in the name of their religion. Thus far they do well, and shame their predecessors ; but not so well when they adopt, and carry out to the extremest consequences, the misleading distinction between the secular and the Christian, between this world and the other, and organize a system of sharp separation, which shall forbid the holy, the ideal, the divine, from ever mingling with the useful, the real, the human ; which consigns all the substantive work to one set of guardians,—all the spirit

which should animate it to another ; which builds one room for the intellect and another for the conscience ; filling the former with an air only clear and dry, and the latter with one only solemn and dull. It is a fatal defiance of nature and reality thus to pick the soul out of knowledge and the body out of faith ; pledging the one to unconsecrated reason, and the other to an unreasonable God. We are not made upon this pattern, to be children of nature at ten o'clock, and children of grace at four ; nor is religion a separate business, a branch of study, a program lesson, that can be emptied out into an hour ; but a life of every time, a spirit of all work, a secret wonder in the thought, a manly duty in the will, a noble sweetness in the temper, which spreads from the eye of an earnest teacher, though seldom coming from his lips ; but which would cease to lurk in his silent looks, were there not sacred things represented by him of which at any moment he might speak. In short, religion is the very respiration of all faithful and loving toil ; and to detach it for minutes specially reserved, is like proposing to take your walk in the morning, and do your breathing in the afternoon.

If so, however, it would seem that we cannot approve the saying of Socrates, that virtue is capable of being taught. Yet this does not follow, when we understand aright, or at least understand in his sense, what *teaching* really is. There are, I think, three different pro-

cesses to which the word may be applied,—processes so different, that what is true of one may very well be false of another.

In the most familiar of its applications, to *teach* is to *give information* ; to report facts foreign to the learner's ken, but known to us by observation or testimony. Thus you tell the child that the earth is round, that Solon made laws, that Paul was a native of Tarsus. In communicating to him such matters of science or of history as these, you deposit upon his mind what was wholly absent before, and, but for intervention like yours, he could never have acquired ; and in receiving it, he takes it on trust, and, relying on your authority, puts it by among the stores of remembrance. External facts are the matter, attestation the basis, memory the faculty, concerned in this kind of teaching. When we ask ourselves whether duty and faith can be taught in this way, the answer is plain : you may certainly give the child just maxims and right rules to learn : you may tell him, as of an historic incident, that God once made the world, and Christ once visited it ; he can get these things by rote as well as any other, and will no less readily take your word for them. Nay, he will allow them an influence on his conduct ; and, so far as he is docile, will rise early and work diligently, and live temperately and pray punctually, in conformity with the precepts you have given. Is this then *goodness* that you have taught him, and is he *well instructed* in the

law of God? Far from it; he has been *broken in* like an animal, not *converted* as a Christian; and copies decencies by imitation, instead of creating anything from the order of an inner love. What he takes up as *information* and leaves resting on testimony, remains on the outside of his nature: he may shape his course by it, as the navigator by his assurance that the earth is round: there may be sense and prudence in both acts, but it is a mockery to say there is *goodness* in either. Both have accidentally fallen in with rules that work well. But as the mariner has no claim to the repute of *science* from merely having the true picture in his fancy of a round earth, without any apprehension of the evidence that justifies it, so neither has his counterpart in morals any title to the praise of goodness, merely because he is moulded to right usages, without ever touching their solemn ground, or becoming the organ of their divine authority. Doubtless this outward training is good, where it succeeds, for the *drill of the world*; and if camp regulations could serve as well as pure affections, we might be content, and ask no more. But, God be praised, it is a thing that will but partially succeed: everywhere there are men to whom life is something more than parade-exercise; in whom ideal passions burn with flame intense enough to reveal another world; and who whiff away official prescriptions on a sigh for the kingdom of heaven.

There is another and higher teaching, to which

recourse may be had in the formation of character. You may present yourself before a nobler faculty than memory, and generously dispense with the vote of confidence in yourself. In every heart God has implanted moral admirations and disgusts, dormant, perhaps, until occasion comes, but ready to waken into power, and do homage to the noble and spurn the base. These natural sentiments you may exercise, and exercising may confirm, by offering to them examples for judgment,—examples of patient suffering that touches the springs of pity, of selfishness and cruelty that gnaw the heart with honest indignation, of heroic faithfulness that flings across the soul a breeze of resolution, of saintly love that diffuses the very atmosphere of heaven. If these can be living examples, taken from the very incidents of the hour, and even from the home sphere of vision, the discipline is wholesome of immediately detecting the ideal in the actual,—of drawing forth beauty from ashes, and finding *real* engagement for the sympathies that most unite us with each other and with God. But, in any case, history is long and rich ; and the lives of the great and good are never far, but lie scattered like gems upon its thread, wherever it traces the labyrinth of the past. And fiction is full of moral portraiture, so drawn as to clear the expression of bewildering admixture and bespeak a verdict without reserve. By bringing this various world before the mind, you deliver it from the imprisonment of

merely personal experience; you enlarge the ethical field of view; you practise the judicial faculty; and introduce the sentiments of right and wrong to the whole climax of their range. The effect of this wider experience is incalculably great. Opening fresh continents of character to mental survey, and throwing the human tones upon the ear in language unheard before, startling the young observer with the sigh of pity and the vow of justice and the prayer of sorrow, in dialect other than the vernacular, it acts upon the judgments of conscience like foreign travel upon those of perception; and imparts a quickness of insight and breadth of view which are unattainable within a narrow circle, and which, by the very presence within the memory of a thousand other scenes of beauty, bathe the homelandscape in a light of new endearment. And the smaller the scale of the personal lot, the more precious and needful are these friendships of history. He that cannot leave his workshop or his village, let him have his passport to other centuries, and find communion in a distant age: it will ennoble him to look up into those silent faces that cannot deceive, and take the hand of solemn guidance that will never mislead or betray. The ground-plot of a man's own destiny may be closely shut in, and the cottage of his rest be small; but if the story of this old world be not quite strange to him,—if he can find his way through its vanished cities to hear the pleadings of justice or watch the

worship of the gods ; if he can visit the battle-fields where the infant life of nations has been baptized in blood ; if he can steal into the prisons where lonely martyrs have waited for their death ; if he can walk in the Garden or beneath the Porch where the lovers of wisdom discourse, or be a guest at the banquet where the wine of their high converse passes round ; if the experiences of his own country and the struggles that consecrate the very soil beneath his feet are no secret to him, and he can listen to Latimer at Paul's Cross, and tend the wounded Hampden in the woods of Chalgrove, and gaze, as on familiar faces, at the portraits of More and Bacon, of Vane and Cromwell, of Owen, Fox, and Baxter ;—he consciously belongs to a grander life than could be given by territorial possession ; he venerates an ancestry auguster than a race of kings ; and is richer in the sources of character than many a merchant-prince or railway-monarch. Hence the advantage which *human studies* possess over every form of science ; the sympathy with man over the knowledge of nature. They are an enlargement of moral experience ; and call into continual exercise the sense of right and wrong, in the natural appreciation of motives and verdicts of approbation or censure.

Still, the mere exhibition of examples, taken as they turn up to view, can do no more than furnish opportunity for the application and expression of admiration or abhorrence. It is a practical gymnastic of the moral

sentiments, which prevents their perishing from attenuation for want of nutriment and exercise. But their decisions are taken one by one: they are purely impulsive; not wrong, it may be, in their direction, but right rather by happy nature than by any guidance of reflective insight. The utmost that can be gained by this species of discipline is a moral perception, quick and true, so far as depends on healthy exercise. But for solidity and thoroughness of character, more is needed than a series of preferences, separately right; and perhaps as many faults proceed from the want of just proportion among true admirations, as from the dominance of false ones. Have you never met with one, full of unselfish enthusiasm, before whose vision some single virtue, probably slighted or despised of men, loomed so large as to cover nearly his whole horizon? He seems to have his various nature all drawn into the vortex of one absorbing zeal, and to be wholly made up of temperance, or of purity, or of some form of pity,—for the sumpter beast, or the hunted savage, or the manacled slave, or the neglected child: he judges others merely by their relation to his central aim, and has neither eye nor ear for any grace of mind or precious thing in life that do not lie within his angle of vision. Regarded as a mere healing medicine for human ills, administered for the recovery of lost social health, he has a claim on high appreciation. He is needed, only too grievously, for bringing up on the march the



sick and lagging virtues that have fallen dangerously into the rear ; nor can it be denied that to the limited intensity of natures such as his we owe many a successful assault upon shameful and unrepented wrongs. But it is no less impossible to deny that in this service to the world, his individual completeness of character is sacrificed, and that his moral growth is arrested at no advanced stage. As, in the intellectual life, it is better to be possessed by one idea than by none, so in the practical it is better certainly to pursue one right end than none ; but as the former is only the beginning of Reason, so the latter goes no further than the rudiments of Conscience. He is not a musician who can play but one tune ; nor is he a pattern of life who is always on one duty.

Nor is this exclusiveness the only danger against which even just admiration may have to guard. Nothing is more possible, few things are more frequent, than to be caught up by a succession of moral fervours, awakened by heroic lives, or ideal creations of various, perhaps contrasted, types. What schoolboy heart, though he should come from a Quaker home, is proof against the fascination of bravery in the field or on the sea, and can learn, without an eager glow, the story of a Leonidas, a Scipio, a Belisarius, a Nelson ? Yet, ere long, he will be susceptible to other appeals, and be conquered perhaps by the biography of some ascetic Apostle, who scorns the pleasures and the ease of life to

reclaim its wastes, and curb its desolating passions. Or, his heart is subdued, it may be, by the sweet patience of some hopeless sufferer at home, sinking away through a long martyrdom without a murmur, and with a bright mingling still in other's natural joy. Or, he is carried off by some devoted champion of injured rights or forgotten truth, and cannot sleep for the fire of justice that burns in his soul, or the light of conviction that dazzles his eye. There is not one of these impulses against which any censuring word can be uttered : each, in itself, deserves the hold which it obtains upon him. But they are not agreed in their disposal of him : they take him by fits and starts, and carry him captive, now to this service of duty, now to that, and dissipate his moral strength by fortuitous change of direction. Many a generous nature may you see which is not much the better for its many virtues, because they are always running in each other's way.

To obviate this danger, there remains a final step of discipline. Besides taking care that *only* virtue is admired, and that *every* virtue is admired, we must see that each is assigned to its own place, and usurps no relative rank that does not belong to it. Rich and various as are the elements of goodness, there is in it a real unity which controls and harmonizes them,—a unity founded upon a fixed scale of natural worth and authority in our several springs of action ; and producing a perfectly balanced character, when our preferences

are accurately true to the gradations of this scale. In aiming at this ultimate end, it is needful to resort to a higher teaching, of *comparative morals*, bringing together approximate types of ethical choice, and separating them again by their just distinctions : nor is this difficult, if the moral sentiments, instead of rushing impetuously on the sentence they pronounce, are stopped and interrogated till they are brought to see their way and feel their ground. The teacher will be most successful in this who has a clear intellectual apprehension of the real grounds, in the constitution of our nature, on which the final estimates of the conscience repose. But, for the learner's discipline of character, it is enough that he be brought to *feel* them ; that his natural judgments, of approval and preference, be carried, by adequate examples, through their whole range, so as to stand organized into a virtual code of ready-made decisions. He may be thus secured, without theory, from the surprises of partial enthusiasm and the mutual interference of unsettled admirations, and sent forth with all the conditions of individual excellence. Speculative insight is not needful for practical goodness, even in its highest form, and has not the smallest tendency to create or deepen it. It may often happen, however, that the learner will have not only to take and keep his course of duty, but to defend it from intellectual attack : the critic's sophism, the cynic's scorn, may meet and harass him ; and

though he may dumbly persist on his way, he will be helpless against them, unless he give account of the ultimate and justifying reason for his rule of life. So long as he cannot do this, he painfully misses the positive co-operation of his own understanding, and having no pathway by which to carry his own convictions into questioning minds, seems to betray the very sanctities dearest to his heart. If his goodness is to be not only large and balanced and steadfast, but intelligent and able to answer for itself against gainsayers, it must be carried beyond the stage of mere correct impression, and be brought to distinct self-consciousness of its own inner principle: the method must be apprehended, as well as the right order secured, of its own preferences. Then at last will the Moral Law, while felt in its solemn authority, be also seen in its majestic proportions; and, while owned as the central mystery of human nature, be understood as the revelation of the Divine.

And here it is that we reach the final safeguard for the unity of Conscience,—its anchorage of shelter from gusts of fitful impulse. When all its authority has emerged from its impersonal essence, and taken refuge in one infinite and perfect Mind, and instead of startling us with inarticulate bursts of thunder or of melody, appeals to us in living tones of communion to which we can respond, the essential symmetry of righteousness finds its spiritual home, and is secured from

falling asunder by the eternal perfection of God. With the perpetuity of Piety is wrapped up, I deeply believe, the durability of Right; and the shock which overthrows the temple of worship scatters also the moral law in ruin on the ground, to testify, in beautiful but pathetic fragments, to a life now gone. Happily, the "spirit in man," and the "inspiration of God," that together built that life, can rebuild it, in fairer proportions and on a vaster scale. But still, if it is to be a school of goodness, it must also remain a sanctuary of devotion.

## XXIII.

### The offering of Art to Worship.



ISAIAH lii. 1.

“Awake, awake! put on thy strength, O Zion! put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem!”

WORSHIP is the free offering of ourselves to God; ever renewed, because ever imperfect. It expresses the consciousness that we are his by right, yet have not duly passed into his hand; that the soul has no true rest but in him, yet has wandered in strange flights until her wing is tired. It is her effort to return home, the surrender again of her narrow self-will, her prayer to be merged in a life diviner than her own. It is at once the lowliest and loftiest attitude of her nature: we never hide ourselves in ravine so deep; yet overhead we never see the stars so clear and high. The sense of saddest estrangement, yet the sense also of eternal affinity between us and God meet and mingle in the act; breaking into the strains, now penitential and now jubilant, that, to the critic's reason, may sound at variance but melt into harmony in the ear of a higher love.

This twofold aspect devotion must ever have, pale with weeping, flushed with joy ; deploring the past, trusting for the future ; ashamed of what it is, kindled by what is meant to be ; shadow behind, and light before. Were we haunted by no presence of sin and want, we should only browse on the pasture of nature : were we stirred by no instinct of a holier kindred, we should not be drawn towards the life of God. In Christian worship, through all its confessions of estrangement, there runs the undertone of near communion between the human spirit and the Divine. And if communion, then sympathy and resemblance too : for like only can commune with like : when eye meets eye and knows it, there is the same fire alive in both : when affection answers to affection, there is a common language of intelligence between them ; and *something* in us there must be,—some possible love or thought or goodness,—akin to the Infinite Perfection and flowing forth to meet it. *This* it is,—this best element of us,—which asserts its rights and struggles to its place in every expression of religion. Devotion instinctively tries to lay down whatever separates from God, and to pass wholly into what unites with him. It takes its stand on the felt common ground, the points of meeting, between the human and the Divine. Hence, from the type of their worship you may at once read off men's conceptions of God and their ideal of man. That which they exclude is to them the secular and undivine : that which they most

reverently preserve is their medium of contact between heaven and earth. Their poorer or richer idea of the holy and perfect life is reflected in the character of their devotions, speaks to the eye in the aspect of their sanctuaries, and to the ear in the voice of their praise. It may seem at first sight a mere external accident or matter of prudential choice, how far they admit *Art* into the expression of their Religion; but nothing is in truth more significant of the character of their faith and feeling. It was not simple reaction from Catholic excess that stripped Protestantism so bare, that drove all its beauty and grandeur into the interior of life, and left it externally without form or comeliness. It is not by chance alone that its two extremes, of Evangelical and of Rationalistic tendency, have carried the ugliness of Protestantism to the fullest extent, while the Church of England has saved a remnant of dignity for the eye, and created her rich anthem-music for the ear. These facts have a deep connexion with the very essence of differing devotions; and the whole question of religious art,—that still doubtful ground of Christian usage,—runs up to a higher principle than can be found in the Puritanical tendency of one school or the dilettante affectations of another.

Christian worship, I have said, takes its stand on the common ground of the human nature and the Divine. It banishes the trivial things that are only ours: it foregoes the transcendent light that is only his: but at the



middle distance, where the two may meet, with the same love, the same thought, as medium of vision, there does devotion abide and rest. To ask then, whether the elements of beauty fitly enter into our worship of God, is to enquire, in what part of our nature do we meet him? through what range of affections does the communion extend? and where, on the other hand, begins the veil of darkness that hinders mutual approach? To these questions Protestantism has given two answers to which I will advert, a *Moral* and a *Mystical*.

Many of us, it cannot be doubted, shape our belief into this form: God is a Wise Mind, from whom nothing is hid. He is a Holy Will, loving Faithfulness and Right. It is in our *Reason and our Conscience* that we bear his image, and commune with him as his children. Whilst these are pure and awake, we are not far from him, and his lineaments are on us, so far as the finite can reflect the infinite. The field of Truth for the Intellect, of Duty for the Will,—this is the soil given us to render fruitful; and by the scrupulous care we bestow upon its tillage are we and our life to be measured. To read the design, to comply with the law of heaven, to adopt the supreme aims, and walk by appointed rules,—this is our only business here, our only discipline for the hereafter. For this service the grand requisites are mental activity and moral watchfulness, the quick eye of thought, the high tension of resolve; and *he* renders the most genuine worship who

masters his temptations and is severe on his neglects,—who earns his charities by self-denial,—and suppresses his passions beneath a mind serene. The true and only alliance with God is through the inward order of a balanced heart and the outward of a blameless life.

Now far be it from me to deny the sufficiency, for individual acceptance, of this *moral sympathy* with God. It belongs to the very kernel of the Christian character; and whoever evinces it,—be his mind ever so narrow, and the remaining fires of his nature ever so faint and low,—has in him the beginnings of peace, the secret of reconciliation. If the only problem of religion were that of personal security, if, having found the lowest terms of mercy, you will rest in these and aspire no further, I cannot say that God will reject any scrupulous fidelity, however cold and colourless it may be. He may *require* only this; but assuredly he *loves* a great deal more, and he *is* a great deal more, than this doctrine contemplates. For, was it not he that dwelt in Christ, and gleamed on us through the tender graces of his soul, and taught us in him how to do the moralities by transcending them with a holy love? And it is precisely on these higher affections, on inspirations that fold us in a light beyond our own, that the spirit of beauty first steals into our modes of devotion to mediate between the soul and God. Worship is the organ, not of self-possessed volition, but of self-oblivious enthusiasm; not of definite resolve, but of

infinite aspiration ; not of ethical circumspection, but of free escape into divine communion. It is no wonder that, where religion is limited to the moral administration of social life, the admission of Art into it is reluctant or insincere. It was not to keep men temperate and honest that the vaulted Minster was raised, or the Sanctus pealed through its aisles : neglected duties are not enforced by architecture, or victories over temptation achieved by music. Not that the congeniality of beauty with goodness is for a moment to be denied : but her ministrations are too circuitous and subtle for the mere moralist to appreciate, and too sensitive and shrinking to lend themselves to the service of his will. Didactic Art is a simple contradiction, like scientific lyrics or geometric elegies ; and those who hold a mere rational and ethical Christianity, who put their trust in instruction and authority alone, have no natural entrance into a symbolic temple and a majestic worship. If a prophet cry, "Awake, awake ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem," they ask 'What good is it ? Will it signify to God ? Will it not cost more than it is worth to men ?'—never suspecting that human worship is no calculation of good at all, neither a propitiation of heaven nor a self-culture of the disciple's character ; but the spontaneous rising of the soul to the Holiest of all,—the natural flow of her fretting grief and sin into that still deep,—the out-pouring of the awe, the hope, the contrition,

the inextinguishable trust, with which she clings to the affectionateness of God. Touched with this inspiration, she needs larger, grander, fairer instruments of expression than her own poor gifts supply: she cannot bear the defaced image of humanity which her broken mirror shows: she feels hurt by the disappointing tones of her common voice: she dilates to the scale of sublimer forms, and fills the volume of the choral chant: she seizes on all height and depth and intensity to speak for her, and demands room and rhythm to pass with measured reverence out to God. This it is, and this alone, that makes the difference between the Church and the lecture-room; permitting the latter to be simply commodious, but longing for the former to be fair and solemn. We are not, nor is the Soul of souls, all Reason and Moral Sense; and the doctrine which proceeds on such assumption ignores the spontaneous affections, the intuitive enthusiasms which are the living forces of all spiritual natures. *They* it is that create, while the others do but control; and in religion to make everything of reason and conscience, and distrust all else as only given in order to be watched and restrained, is to mistake the check for the power; to expel God from our nature and take the management ourselves; to bind ourselves up in negative vigilance; and turn life from a hymn of Love to a problem of prosaic skill.

But there are Christians who, by a very different path, arrive at a not less homely result. Instead of

beginning, as the moralist does, with the human faculties, of reason and conscience, and, because they are our best, making them the common term of earth and heaven, some sects of mystic tendency reason down from the Divine Essence: they dwell upon the truth that "God is a Spirit;" and then, looking for the abode of that spirit within themselves, seek communion by the blending of the finite emanation with the Infinite Source. Mingled but not quenched in our personality there dwells the essential life of God; which bears witness with ours that we are his children. Hither must we descend to meet him: into the lowest deeps of inner silence we must go and wait his sign; disrobing ourselves of sense, laying down our will, letting desire and self fall away in trance, till our divine susceptibilities stand disengaged and bare, and nothing stifles the breathing of his presence. To the meditative minds that are possessed with this mood, the word *Spirit* expresses the common ground of the human and the Divine natures; and the great object of religion is to let drop the intervening folds that detain them from conscious communion. Hence this faith carries on its darker hemisphere an antipathy to matter, as the clog and obstruction that holds spirit from spirit; and is ever striving to be clear of its presence and deal with it as though it were not. If, in order to realize the advent of the Comforter, the ear must be closed to sound, and the eyelids droop to

make a shade, and the body be still as if in loneliness and death, it is plain that whatever addresses itself to our perceptions is excluded as a distraction and spurned as a carnal thing. In the worship native to such a faith there is therefore no room for outward grandeur and impressiveness: all its material arrangements are attempts to extinguish the material, to hide their own selves away, to enclose a piece of space and silence for souls to hold their peace and wait. Were the world formed upon this model it is manifest that such a thing as Art could never be. In a universe of only spirits, no beauty save of thought could arise; and *that* must remain latent and unexpressed. In a universe of matter only and no soul within, beauty could have no place at all; for there would be nothing to express. In the latter case the source would be dry,—in the former the outcome would be denied. Hence, with every sect and every age in which the doctrine of the Spirit has become exclusive and unchastened, and the contrast between material Nature and the immaterial God has been exaggerated into absolute enmity, the modes of worship have been rude and bare, negligent of any outward grace of reverence, jarring on the natural music of humanity; and have relied on an inwardness of piety which, however true to transient moments of the private heart, can never be raised into an institution for collected men. A voiceless and invisible Church!

it is a dream of faith overstrained with the preternatural watch-night, and must break up when the natural morning beams return. What is falsely called a purely spiritual worship is an attempt to evolve and sustain devotion from isolated powers of the spirit that are never meant to act alone.

Neither a religion then didactic to the natural man, nor a religion recipient of the supernatural God, opens any sanctuary of beauty. The one wants a platform for its lecturers; the other, a retirement for its saints. The one deals with too level a humanity; the other invokes too ghostly a Deity. The Moralist has no faith in any inspiration for man and supposes him pretty much set up for himself. The mystic has no faith in the *naturalness* of God, and thinks it difficult for him to be felt through the substance of the world. The former believes in no Incarnation, but conceives that God for ever remains *only* God, and man *only* man. The other believes indeed in an incarnation, but looks on it rather as a humbling of the Divine nature than as a glorifying of the human. Both delude themselves with narrow and partial conceptions of the relation between the Father of souls and ourselves. He is not *all* supernatural; and we are not all natural. He transcends the universe, no doubt,—goes out beyond it, and includes in his Mind a thousand possible universes besides; but also he occupies the universe, and makes it plastic to his

thought and articulate to his affection. We, on the other hand, are not simply parts of nature, but possessed, like him, of faculties above it; within it, yet beyond it; able to seize the meaning he puts into it, and so to mould it as to give back a responsive meaning of our own. And it is precisely on this middle ground, neither helpless mind nor empty matter, but mind wielding matter and making it pliant to the inner conception and transparent to the coloured lights and shades of Love, that the two spiritual natures, finite and infinite, must meet in their communion. That God is a Spirit has not hindered him from shaping the vault of night and hanging it with stars; or from tinting the tender blue of day, save where it shrinks from the glory of the sun; or from spreading the sheet of sea and streaking it with green and gold; or from poisoning the summer clouds to fling the chase of purple shadows on the hills; or from shining through the cool light of the spring woods; or from dwelling in our humanity to touch it with many a grace and repeat in it the image of his pity and his truth, or from resting with the Man of Sorrows as the symbol of his purity and holy love. These are the works of his Creativeness,—the appeal of his beauty to our hearts,—the mighty poem he improvises through all the rhythm of the universe.

And if he speaks to us by type, by type alone can we reply. He is too great to give us all his thought :



we are too small to command in return more than faint tracings of ours ; and so, for opposite reasons and from opposite ends of the scale of spirits, we meet midway in the endeavour to embody our living word,—the Infinite pressing into manifestation through the Finite ; and the Finite struggling to represent the Infinite. Ask me not the *use* of exhausting the resources of form and colour and melody, merely to utter the unutterable ; or else ask your Maker what is the use of the tear, the laugh, the clasped hands of supplication, or the returning exile's fall upon the neck to rest and sob. These things are not useful contrivances but natural language ; and in proportion as God has been lavish of expression, and charges all things with inner meaning deeper than their outward use, should we more freely bring him our choicest as the medium of our aspirings. Am I reminded of what is called the simplicity of the early Church,—of the upper chamber in Jerusalem or the unadorned proseucha, that sufficed for Apostolic disciples ? Yes ; but this was at least the *best they had* ; and no more is asked from us. *Less than this* no true devotion has ever given. In ages and among sects where the sanctuary has been bare, so too has been the private house ; but it is ever a fatal sign,—of Art decaying into luxury and religion into contempt,—when men permit the House of God to be meaner than their own,—when they allow to their domestic pleasure what they

refuse to their collective worship. The standard of fitness for one place or time changes on removal to another; and the only constant rule is this, that devotion is the offering of ourselves,—of our whole selves, of our best selves, to God.

This rule will guard us alike from too prosaic and too highly wrought a worship. For, after all, the evangelical protest against an ornate ritual,—nay, even the Puritan iconoclasm itself,—does not really mean a war against beauty in the sanctuary. Rather is it a declaration against things that are no longer beautiful in its sight; against signs that have displaced their own significance; against symbols that either suggest the false, or are so puerile as to degrade the truth for which they stand; against forms and acts that intercept communion with spiritual realities; against a system of histrionic show which, however put upon the stage, can be only hideous to those whose living devotion it mimics and interrupts. It is because “the beauty of holiness” is *other than this*,—because, in offering this, we withhold a fairer as well as purer worship to which we are now called,—that the modern ecclesiastical reaction enlists against it so much manly piety. There is no rude preference for a bald and graceless service; but a just feeling that, unless we honour religion with a more chaste and majestic art, we do not lay upon the altar the offering of our best.

While refusing however to resume the childish ele-

ments of mediæval usage, we cannot part with the grand permanent features which have given a sublime identity to the worship of Christendom through all its history. Let it not be forgotten that it is no new thing, no little individual thought of today, which we come here to breathe. The faith in which we join is the faith of eighteen centuries, and now carries in it the glorified memories of them all. Every great and good mind that has lived by it and died in it has given it new meaning, and lifted it into higher consecration; has put a fresh tone into its speech, and on its saintly countenance set another lineament of grace. Into the worship that brings us together here has flowed the lofty will of Ambrose, the passion of Augustine, the sanctity of St. Francis, the sweetness of Tauler, the nobleness of Milton, and the fervours of countless holy men. What voice shall serve us to breathe it all? What light shall worthily show us all the meaning of that distant Calvary, through the august perspective of such a Christendom, with its lines of martyrs and spirits of the saints? Their solemn shadows lie around us here: their tender and majestic voices steal into the chorus of our hymn; and should surely lift both the outer music of our temple and the inner melody of our hearts towards the height of their divine strain, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are all thy ways, O Thou King of Saints!"

## XXIV.

### The Transient and the Real in Life.

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JOB xii. 22.

“He discovereth deep things out of darkness ; and bringeth out to light the shadow of Death.”

IT is the oldest, as it is the newest, reproach of the Cynic against the devout, that they construe the universe by themselves ; attribute it to a Will like their own ; tracing in it imaginary vestiges of a Moral plan, and expecting from it the fulfilment of their brilliant but arbitrary dreams. Instead of humbly sitting at the feet of Nature, copying her order into the mind, and shaping all desire and belief into the form of her usages and laws, they turn out their own inward life into the spaces of the world, and impose their longings and admirations on the courses and issues of Time. With childish self-exaggeration, it is said, we fancy creation governed like a great human life,—peopled with motives, preferences, and affections, parallel to ours,—its light and heat, its winds and tides, its seasons and its skies, administered by choice of good

or ill, transparent with the flush of an infinite love, or suffused with the shadow of an infinite displeasure. We set at the helm of things a glorified humanity ; and that is our God. We think away from society the cries of wrong and the elements of sin, leaving only what is calm and holy ; and that is our Kingdom of Heaven. We picture to ourselves youth that never wastes, thought that never tires, and friendship without the last adieu ; and that is our Immortality. Religion, we are assured, is thus born of Misery : it is the soul's protest against disappointment and refusal to accept it ; the Pity which our nature takes upon its own infirmities ; and is secured only on the pathos of the human heart.

Be it so. Are you sure that the security is not good ? Are we so made as to learn everything from the external world, and nothing out of ourselves ? Grant the allegation. Let our diviner visions be the native instinct, the home inspiration, of our thought and love : are they therefore false, because *we* think them ? illusory, because beautiful relatively to us ? Am I to believe the register of my Senses, and to contradict the divinations of Conscience, and the trusts of pure Affection ? Is it a sign of highest Reason to deny God until I see him, and blind myself to the life eternal, till I am born into its surprise ? Nothing more arbitrary, nothing narrower, can well be conceived than to lay down the rule, that our lowest endowment,—the Perceptive

powers which introduce us to material things,—have the monopoly of knowledge; and that the surmises of the Moral sense have nothing true, and the vaticinations of devoted Love only a light that leads astray. The wiser position surely is, that the Mind is a balanced organ of truth all round: that each faculty sees aright on its own side of things, and can measure what the others miss: the hand, the palpable; the eye, the visible; the imagination, the beautiful; the spirit, the spiritual; and the will, the good. How else indeed could God and Heaven, if really there, enter our field of knowledge, but by standing thus in relation to some apprehensive gift in us, and emerging as the very condition of its exercise and the attendant shadow of its movements?

And, in truth, if we are not strangely self-ignorant, we must be conscious of two natures blended in us, each carrying a separate order of beliefs and trusts, which may assert themselves with the least possible notice of the other. There is the nature which lies open to the play of the finite world, gathers its experience, measures everything by its standard, adapts itself to its rules, and discharges as fictitious whatever its appearances fail to show. And underlying this, in strata far below, there is the nature which stands related to things Infinite, and heaves and stirs beneath their solemn pressure, and is so engaged with them as hardly to feel above it the sway and ripple of the tran-

sitory tides. Living by the one, we find our place in nature ; by the other, we lose ourselves in God. By the first, we have our science, our skill, our prudence ; by the second, our philosophy, our poetry, our reverence for Duty. The one computes its way by foresight ; the other is self-luminous for insight. In short, the one puts us into communication with the order of appearances ; the other, with eternal realities. It is a shallow mind which can see to the bottom of its own beliefs, and is conscious of nothing but what it can measure in evidence and state in words ;—which feels in its own guilt no depth it cannot fathom, and in another's holiness no beauty it can only pine to seize ; which reads on the face of things,—on the glory of the earth and sky, on human joy and grief, on birth and death, in pity and heroic sacrifice, in the eyes of a trusting child and the composure of a saintly countenance,—no meanings that cannot be printed ; and which is never drawn, alone and in silence, into prayer exceeding speech. Things infinite and divine lie too near to our own centre, and mingle in too close communion, to be looked at as if they were there instead of here : they are given, not so much for definition, as for trust ; are less the objects we think of, than the very tone and colour of our thought, the tension of our love, the unappeasable thirst of grief and reverence. Till we surrender ourselves not less freely to the implicit faiths folded up in the interior Reason, Conscience and Affec-

tion, than to the explicit beliefs which embody in words the laws of the outward world, we shall be but one-eyed children of Nature, and utterly blind prophets of God.

No doubt, these two sides of our humanity, supplying the temporal and the spiritual estimates of things, are at ceaseless variance: they reckon by incommensurable standards, and the answers can never be the same. The natural world, with the part of us that belongs to it, is so framed as to make nothing of importance to us except the rules by which it goes, and to bid us ask no questions about its origin; since we have equally to fall in with its ways, be they fatal or be they Divine. But to our Reason, in its noblest exercise, it makes a difference simply infinite, whether the universe it scans is in the hands of Dead Necessity or of the Living God. This, which our science ignores, is precisely the problem which our intellect is made to ponder. Again, our Social System of Rights and Obligations, is constructed on the assumption, that with the springs of action we have no concern: they fulfil all conditions, if we ask nothing, and give nothing, beyond the conduct happiest in its results. But the natural Conscience flies straight to the inner springs of action as its sole interest and object: it is there, simply as an organ for interpreting them, and finding in them the very soul of righteousness: that which the outward observer shuns, is the inward spirit's holy place. And, once more, Nature, as the mere mother of us all, takes small



account, in this thronged and historic world, of the single human life; repeating it so often as to render it cheap; short as it is, often cutting its brief thread; and making each one look so like the other, that you would say it could not matter who should go. But will our private Love, which surely has the nearer insight, accept this estimate? Do we, when its treasure has fallen from our arms, say, of the term of human years, "It has been enough"?—that the possibilities are spent? that the cycle of the soul is complete; and that, with larger time and renovated opportunity, it could learn, and love, and serve no more? Ah no! to deep and reverent affection there is an aspect under which Death must ever appear unnatural; and its cloud, after lingering awhile till the perishable elements are hid, grows transparent as we gaze, and half shows, half veils, a glorious image in the depth beyond. Tell me not that affection is blind, and magnifies its object in the dark. Affection blind! I say there is nothing else that can see; that can find its way through the windings of the soul it loves, and know how its graces lie. The Cynic thinks that all the fair look of our humanity is on the outside, inasmuch as each mind will put on its best dress for company; and if *there* he detects some littleness and weakness, which perhaps his own cold eye brings to the surface, there can be only what is worse within. Dupe that he is of his own wit! he has not found out, that all the evil spirits of human

nature flock to him ; that his presence brings them to the surface from their recesses in every heart, and drives the blessed angels to hide themselves away : for who would own a reverence, who tell a tender grief, before that hard ungenial gaze ? Wherever he moves, he empties the space around him of its purest elements : with his low thought he roofs it over from the heavenly light and the sweet air ; and then complains of the world as a close-breathed and stifling place. It is not the critic, but the lover, who can know the real contents and scale of a human life ; and that interior estimate, as it is the truer, is always the higher : the closest look becomes the gentlest too ; and domestic faith, struck by bereavement, easily transfigures the daily familiar into an image congenial with a brighter world.

Our faculties and affections are graduated then to objects greater, better, fairer and more enduring, than the order of Nature gives us here. They demand a scale and depth of being which outwardly they do not meet, yet inwardly they are the organ for apprehending. Hence a certain glorious sorrow must ever mingle with our life : all our actual is transcended by our possible ; our visionary faculty is an overmatch for our experience : like the caged bird, we break ourselves against the bars of the finite, with a wing that quivers for the infinite. To stifle this struggle, to give up the higher aspiration, and be content with making our small lodgings snug, is to cut off the summit of our nature, and live upon the

flat of a mutilated humanity. To let the struggle be, however it may sadden us, to trust the pressure of the soul towards diviner objects and more holy life, and measure by it the invisible ends to which we tend, this is true faith ; the unfading crown of an ideal and progressive nature. It is indeed, and ever must be, notwithstanding the light that circles it, a crown of thorns ; and the brow that wears it can never wholly cease to bleed. A nature which reaches forth to the perfect from a station in the imperfect must always have a pathetic tinge in its experience. Think not to escape it by any change of scene, though from the noisy streets to the eternal City of God. There is but One for whom there is no interval between what he thinks and what he is : in whom therefore is "Light, and no darkness at all." For us, vain is the dream of a shadowless world, with no interruption of brilliancy, no remission of joy. Were our heaven never overcast, yet we meet the brightest morning only in escape from recent night ; and the atmosphere of our souls, never passing from ebb and flow of love into a motionless constancy, must always break the white eternal beams into a coloured and a tearful glory. Whence is that tincture of sanctity which Christ has given to sorrow, and which makes his form at once the divinest and most pathetic in the world ? It is that he has wakened by his touch the illimitable aspirations of our bounded nature, and flung at once into our thought and affection a holy beauty, a

divine Sonship, into which we can only slowly grow. And this is a condition which can never cease to be. Among the true Children of the Highest, who would wish to be free from it? Let the glorious burden lie! How can we be angry at a sorrow which is the birth-pang of a diviner life?

From this strife, of infinite capacity with finite conditions, spring all the ideal elements which mingle with the matter of our being. Nor is it our Conscience only that betrays the secret of this double life. Our very memory too, though it seems but to photograph the actual, proves to have the Artist's true selecting power, and knows how to let the transient fall away, and leave the imperishable undimmed and clear. As Time removes us from each immediate experience, some freshening dew, some wave of regeneration, brightens all the colours and washes off the dust; so that often, we discover the essence, only when the accidents are gone, and the Present must die from us ere it can truly live. The work of yesterday, with its place and hour, has but a dull look, when we recall it. But the scene of our childish years,—the homestead, it may be, with its quaint garden and its orchard grass; the bridge across the brook from which we dropped the pebbles and watched the circling waves; the school-house in the field, whose bell broke up the game and quickened every lingerer's feet; the yew-tree path where we crossed the churchyard, with arm round the neck of a

companion now beneath the sod: how soft the light, how tender the shadows, in which that picture lies! how musical across the silence are the tones it flings! The glare, the heat, the noise, the care, are gone; and the sunshine sleeps, and the waters ripple, and the lawns are green, as if it were in Paradise. But in these minor religions of life, it is the personal images of companions loved and lost that chiefly keep their watch with us, and sweeten and solemnize the hours. The very child, that misses the mother's appreciating love, is introduced, by his first tears, to that thirst of the heart, which is the early movement of piety, ere yet it has got its wings. And I have known the youth, who through long years of harsh temptation, and then short years of wasting decline, has, from like memory, never lost the sense as of a guardian-angel near, and lived in the enthusiasm, and died into the embrace, of the everlasting holiness. In the heat and struggle of mid-life, it is a severe but often a purifying retreat, to be lifted into the lonely observatory of memory, above the fretful illusions of the moment, and in presence once more of the beauty and the sanctity of life. The voiceless counsels that look through the visionary eyes of our departed steal into us behind our will, and sweep the clouds away, and direct us on a wiser path than we should know to choose. If age ever gains any higher wisdom, it is chiefly that it sits in a longer gallery of the dead, and sees the noble and saintly faces in further

perspective and more various throng. The dim abstracted look that often settles on the features of the old, what means it? Is it a mere fading of the life? an absence, begun already, from the drama of humanity? a deafness to the cry of its woes and the music of its affections? Not always so: the seeming forgetfulness may be but brightened memory; and if the mists lie on the outward present, and make it as a gathering Night, the more brilliant is the lamp within, that illuminates the figures of the Past, and shows again, by their flitting shadows, the plot in which they moved and fell.

It is through such natural experiences,—the treasured sanctities of every true life,—that God “discovereth to us deep things out of darkness, and turneth into light the shadow of Death.” They constitute the *lesser religions* of the soul; and, say what you will, they come and go with the *greater*, and put forth leaf and blossom from the same root. We are so constituted throughout,—in memory, in affection, in conscience, in intellect,—that we cannot rest in the literal aspect of things as they materially come to us. No sooner are they in our possession, than we turn them into some crucible of thought, which saves their essence and precipitates their dross; and their pure idea emerges as our lasting treasure, to be remembered, loved, willed, and believed. What we thus gain then,—is it a falsification? or a revelation? What we discard,—is it the sole constant, which alone we ought to keep? or

the truly perishable, which we deservedly let slip? If the vision which remains with us is fictitious, then is there a fatal misadjustment between the actual universe and the powers given us for interpreting it; so that precisely what we recognise as highest in us,—the human distinctions of Art, of Love, of Duty, of Faith,—must be treated as palming off upon us a system of intellectual frauds. But if the idealizing analysis be true, it is only that our faculties have not merely passive receptivity, but discriminative insight, are related to the permanent as well as to the transient, and are at once prophetic and retrospective; and thus are qualified to report to us, not only what is, but what ought to be and is to be. Did we apply the transforming imagination only *to the present*, so as to discern in it a better possibility beyond, it might be regarded as simply a provision for the progressive improvement of this world,—an explanation still carrying in itself the thought of a beneficent Provider. But we glorify no less what *has been* than what *now is*; and see it in a light in which it never appeared beneath the Sun; and this is either an illusion, or a prevision.

The problem, whether the transfiguring powers of the mind serve upon us an imposture, or open to us a divine vision, carries in its answer the whole future of society, the whole peace and nobleness of individual character. High art, high morals, high faith, are impossible among those who do not believe their own

inspirations, but only court and copy them for pleasure or profit. And for great lives, and stainless purity, and holy sorrow, and surrendering trust, the souls of men must pass through all vain semblances, and touch the reality of an eternal Righteousness and a never-wearyed Love.



## Confirmation Address.

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MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

I have asked you to meet me here this morning, that we may complete our survey of the Christian rite of Communion, and establish the link of final connexion between its history in the world and its private meaning for ourselves. The task of clearing away what is false and dangerous from the rite is brought to a close: to conciliate critical objection I have no more to say; and in the narrower circle that draws together here I may without offence take for granted a general sympathy with the sentiments embodied in this most ancient usage of Christendom. I may assume therefore that the question which you have at heart to answer is simply this: What it is for the first time to take up these sentiments and consciously profess them as your own.

In one sense the act involves nothing that is new, and makes no change in any duty or affection which you may bring to it; but is a mere natural continuation of the order of life and tone of feeling ever familiar to us as the best. It is no sudden conversion, no passage from an unregenerate to a regenerate mind, no

emergence from a darkness of nature to the illumination of grace, that befalls the disciple on first joining the guest-table of Christ. Born within the circle of Christian conditions, you cannot but see life in the light which they shed upon it: they even colour the very eye through which you look at it; and what you admire, what you love, what you feel to be right or wrong, is largely determined by the moral climate of Christendom that has thus far formed and matured your mind. This spontaneous order of taste and sentiment, this free action of character, there is nothing in this day to arrest or change. God's spirit has always lived with you, making your hearts burn with many a noble aspiration, and secretly showing you many a beauty, and remonstrating with you in many a remorse; and he will go on to live with you no otherwise, telling you what is highest, and drawing you variously to himself by sympathy with things holy, true, and good. In him there is no change; in our nature no magical re-construction. Our worship, our commemoration, does not *make* that Real Presence which never has failed and never will fail us, and which would pity and help us still, were we even to deny it. Remembered or forgot by us, he pursues his eternal ways: he needs not our notice, to be here; and whether we come to him or not, he will find us out, though it be in darkness and without a name.

But in another sense, the disciple, at his first com-

munion, *does* enter upon a new stage of being. Life is to us what our blindness or our insight may make it to be; and the same outward scene becomes most different according as it enters the dark soul or the bright. The time comes to us when, without any external change, the dream of slumbering nature breaks, and we wake to find it the reality of God: the objects are still there, and the movements pass as they have always done; but the colours are glorified and the spaces are deepened round; and he who abides in the midst and is the life of all the beauty and the good seems to look personally at us and invite us to know him now, and say that we are old enough to converse with him. The time comes to us when that which we have naturally felt we recognise to be divinely given; when the disguise falls from the features of our conscience and our love and we see gleams there from the living light of God. The time comes when our horizon enlarges; and, after an unconscious life *within the circle* of Christian sentiment, we can survey it from the outside, and on comparison with other forms of thought and character, become aware of its infinite truth and sanctity, and say to ourselves, ‘Yes, this into which I was born is also what I most revere and would trust in life and death: this stooping to the humblest, this aiming at the highest, this surrender of self and reliance on him, this simplicity unconfused by temptation, this hope uncrushed by sorrow,—which

make up the *Christian type*,—let this be my guide, my aim, my prayer.’ To go into communion with Christ is assuredly to set before you this image of human existence as authoritative and divine. If therefore you secretly prefer the type of heathen heroism, founded on *self-assertion* rather than *self-denial*, you cannot truly take the cup from the hand that was pierced to teach us other tastes. If your favourite dream is to live as you like, to spend your time pleasantly, with the least possible burden of unwelcome duty and troublesome earnestness of conviction, it would be scarce sincere to touch the emblems of that life which was broken to redeem us from all this. But if your hearts burn within you, while you read of the firmness of the martyr and the meekness of the saint, or see the patient and loving cheerfulness which faith can infuse into sorrow and disappointment; if you delight in the lives of men and women most dear to the memory of Christendom; if you see more and more, as your minds open and experience deepens, in the thoughts of Paul, of Luther, of Pascal, of Channing; if the Christian prayer is not a foreign idiom but finds you as a native word; if the hymn has for you a genuine grandeur and tenderness and seems to sing the inner melody of your own soul;—then, however far behind you may feel yourself to be, it is quite true to say, ‘This is the train which I would follow, this the cloud of witnesses

in which I would be lost.' To commune with them, to feed on the same aliment of holy wisdom, to drink of the same cup that relieved their immortal thirst, is the desire which the act of today expresses. You therefore step out, so to speak, from the home circle of your early days, and join a wider company, and in spirit form an historic alliance, and choose your friends and sanctuary of shelter in the open field of time. The family group cannot always keep together: the native house will not for ever guard: you enroll yourself therefore in a more enduring band of the good and wise, and pass from mere home dependence to the protection of the City of God. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord shall take me up." Sooner or later, the children, no longer led, have to go into the wilds alone: but there too the shadow of an Almighty guardianship is stretched over the space;—a shadow of Peace that spreads from the cross, and gathers within it the most faithful and holy of all nations.

I think you will admit that, in joining the Christian host, it is only natural to seek a growing acquaintance with its greatest names. It is almost a duty of fidelity not to commune with them as strangers; but to draw near and learn the story of those lives of which the world was not worthy, and be able to tell why you honour their company and emulate their example. To the Christian disciple there is surely an appropriate

knowledge and an appropriate taste, which it is well for him to maintain by culture. It is hardly enough for him to know his religion in its sources, as exhibited in the Scriptures ; he should know it also in its applications and developments, as acting and thinking itself out upon the world. To sit down at the table with Clement and Augustine, with Bernard and Savonarola, with Tauler and Melancthon, with Baxter and Locke and Boyle, and be quite unacquainted with their look and voice, and unfitted for converse with them on their own ground of faith and love, is scarce consistent with the society we claim. We forfeit some of the chief blessings of an historical religion, if we know nothing of its history ; and the moment when you first place yourselves in its line of spiritual inheritance, and ask admission to its venerable succession, is a suitable occasion for some attention to the past ages of Christendom. It may often indeed shock you to find what dark features of humanity conceal themselves behind the sacred veil of the Church : still more often it may perplex you to gather from the thorny controversies of old any immediate fruit of love and duty for today. But the Christian cannot live in the present only : he belongs to eighteen centuries, and carries on him lineaments from them all : the words of faith and prayer which he hears, the responses that flow from his lips, the emblems that meet his eye, the music, the paintings, the poetry, that enrich his worship, have

all of them tones and colours, the form and the feeling of an elder time; without some access to which, their meaning must be half lost to him.

But the chief feature of the rite of Communion is, that it identifies the disciples with their Master in his moment of utter humiliation and surrender, and so bears witness to the great truth, that the very essence and crown of our religion is *self-sacrifice*. If the first Communion is, in some sense, a transition from home dependence to a spiritual life of your own, it is not an *escape into self-will*, but a *dedication to self-sacrifice*. You disengage yourself from blind usage, from mechanical necessity, from unthinking routine, not in favour of less and lighter obedience, but of more and deeper; not to be free of burdensome exactions of duty, but, on the contrary, to pay yourself entirely away,—to reserve nothing,—to follow simply the lead of him that “pleased not himself” and “took on him the form of a servant”; and “humbled himself” “to the death of the cross.” We cannot embrace his cross, and yet refuse our own. We cannot raise the cup of his remembrance to our lips, without a secret pledge, to him, to one another, to the great company of faithful in every age, that we too hold ourselves at God’s disposal, that we will ask nothing on our own account, that we will pass simply into the Divine hand to take us whither it will. Be this the vow of our hearts; and “so let us take of this bread, and drink of this cup.”

## Communion Address—I.

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It is wonderful to think how little likeness there is between our present assembly here and the little company of Galileans at the parting meal. Though we know not what a day may bring forth, we may venture to say, that they were on the eve of a morrow such as cannot well be awaiting us ;—a morrow of which they were so little apprehensive, that their gaudy expectations were but faintly overshadowed by the visible cloud of spirit, flushed, it is true, with faith and love, from which the sad and tender voice of Jesus fell. As they noted in silence his washing of their feet, the humbling lesson passed before them as an empty image or an idle word ; and as Jesus spake eternal truths, their minds were wandering here and there among things that were not to be. The city and her hills were sleeping beneath the night, without a sound but the baying of the watchdog and the footstep of the guard ; and not more unconscious of the full moon were the shadows of Moriah's rock, than were the disciples' minds of the approaching midnight of their life, and of the orb of holy beauty



already shining near them for its guide and glory. But in the dead silence of that hour the crisis was preparing. The conspirators hurry through the streets, and gather together in the hall ; the lanterns are lit, the guides are ready cloaked ; the last lingerer is come ; the passing steps, as of a stealthy troop, throw a fear across the dreams of children, and startle the thoughts of the sleepless sufferers whose eyes are watching for the morning ; the bridge is crossed, and Judas listens at the garden gate ; and soon the fatal kiss decides, who shall be the standing traitor of history ; who shall represent denial brought by a true look to bitter tears ; who, the loving discipleship that cannot tear itself away even from the foot of the cross ; and who shall be for us the Lord of sorrow and the Holiest of God.

This fearful drama, which then was unevolved, lies among the quiet things of history now. We are on the other side of its catastrophe ; and this alone, absolutely parting us from its bewilderment of sorrow, suspense, temptation, terror and despair, leaves us without the characteristic sentiments of that hour, whose formal acts indeed we copy, but whose mental attitudes are inimitable here. No watch of vengeance hovers round this place ; no storm of mockery and crime will disperse us all this night ; no disciple present now will tomorrow turn a wistful gaze on any Calvary, and smite upon the breast and depart,—thrown back in desolation upon a world in which

no justice is, no Providence, no hope. Coming hither from an easy, unmolested life, with composed and settled ways, not leaving all, but rather keeping, and even gathering, the common objects of human desire, while we follow the Leader of our faith, how can we sit here as the representatives of the stricken Galileans, and call ourselves the followers of the cross ?

Yet, fellow-Christians, the contrast, broad as it seems, is more apparent than real. The historical differences that separate us from the first disciples, are as nothing to the human points of resemblance. The same great problem of life is before us. In earnest souls it stirs up the same glorious strife ; and still it leads us to find in Christ our truest guidance. Though the same outward adventure of our all is not asked of us, existence is not without its burdens still. Few perhaps, even among favoured men, are free from some haunting sorrow in their lot,—some hidden yoke of care whose constant pressure, weighing them to earth, they would fain exchange for any anguish short and sharp. And to every faithful mind, however placed, there is an inward heroism, a secret self-renunciation, not possible only, but indispensable, which may well make the form of Jesus toiling on to Calvary the dearest and holiest image to the thoughts. Angels only can serve the perfect Will without a painful self-denial. There are times indeed of kindled purpose and high affection to

us all ; when the spirit is willing and faculty is strong ; when the mighty stream of Resolution sweeps rapidly away, and plays with difficulties as with the momentary bubbles that eddy on its wave ; when a purer atmosphere seems to clear and swell the soul, and every speck of evil passion melts and disappears : and then indeed to the meek and holy there is no cross to bear ; they do not pace up the hill of death, but are rather borne down the mount of triumph over scattered flowers to the City of their God. But duty is constant ; affection, transient : obligation often rises, while the spirit sinks ; and after the divine freshness of the morning air, a sluggish mist damps down, and turns life which had looked brilliant as Eden, into a flat and weary marsh. And then it comes to pass, that we know the path that we should go, but love it no more. Ease bids us stay at home ; inclination shows us a pleasanter way ; or if we set out on the thorny track, we begin to pity our own bleeding feet, and reward with admiration our half-spent strength. When the soul has lost its earliest tension, evil, with close collapse, presses in upon it again ; worthless temptations resume a dreadful force ; the dainty senses are not so easy to despise ; peevish words and sullen thoughts torment us as our familiar fiends ; the moments lent for holy service we desire to steal for selfish whims ; and to the dulled and slothful eye our nearest work seems unnaturally hard.

Yet our loss of the quick and willing spirit does not

alter or abate the solemn charge committed to our hands. The elastic love is gone : the binding duty stays ; and the only difference is, that the ceaseless pressure of a circumambient necessity, unfelt by the full soul, becomes a painful strain upon an exhausted nature. *This* is the cross which, almost daily, we are called to bear ; notwithstanding the languid mind and heavy heart to maintain an even persistency of service, to go with patience on and on, assured that, if we will, we can always take just the next step well. When appetite has the keenest edge, it must be wielded, like a dangerous weapon, with the most absolute mastery. When the nerves quiver with irritable propensity, the will must lay a tranquillizing hand upon their trembling, forbid the lips to open but for quiet words, and compel the heart to live by the placid faith of happier hours. When coward inclination recoils from the austere simplicity of duty, shrinks from the hardness of its strife, grows sensitive to voices of derision, and obtuse to the whisperings of God, then inclination must be punished as a treacherous and wicked counsellor, and all that it forbade be undertaken at any cost. And when the proud, self-justifying thought would refuse to confess, and double the past wrong by shutting it up in sullenness instead of opening it out in secret shame ; we must instantly, by an act of self-crucifying will, invoke the Holiest to witness our impenitence, and humble ourselves within that presence to which our pitiable

disguises are of no avail. And if ever a sad, distrustful mind, producing timid and wavering steps, comes over us, and life appears too vain and death too awful a thing ; it were false in us to submit to such delusion, and listen to such monotony of strain ; and we must force ourselves upon the wing away,—fly to the hills of high faith where dwelleth our help,—lose ourselves in the forests of our deepest worship, where blessed birds will sing the songs of heaven to our weary hearts. This inward denial, this resolute self-mastery, is the peculiar service which, as *human* and not always *inclined* to the best, yet, as *Christians*, bound never to do the worse, we are expected to render. Our work must be achieved, if not from momentary love of it, yet from persistent love of God who gives it. Aye, and the burden must be borne, not with elaborate effort, and audible sighs, and pains that self-complacency takes care to reckon ; but with a cheerful spirit, that can put the poor obtrusive self aside ; with an unsparing mind, that never counts the cost at which a duty must be done ; with entire relinquishment of rights, desiring only leave of service ; with sedate and tranquil frame, like that of Christ through his last day, which beneath a divine composure concealed a universe of thought. We have fallen, alas ! on restless days of too much speech, and few there are that can do a noble thing, and say nothing. But God loves the silent sacrifice ; and no offering is stricken for him, unless it bleeds on the

hidden altar of the heart. For his children, struggling faithfully with the burden of life, his heavenly pity is ever on the watch ; nor does he leave them long in the languor of a weary mind, but comes himself with the blessed inspiration that renews their strength as the eagle's. There is nothing true in earth or heaven, if it be not a law of his, that holy deed shall end in holy thought and holy love ; and patient obedience down upon the dust mature the rapid wings by which to soar and gladly worship at heaven's gate. But let not this be a care to us. It is a selfish religion that grows querulous at its own coldness, and cannot stir the will till it attains a rapture. Our sole business is to abide and serve ; to keep our assigned place, and grow. Planted in the garden of the Lord, we cannot fail of healthful sunshine and of ripening dews, and shall not always complain of the bare and graceless branch we put forth to heaven : only let us hold through all seasons to our allotted soil, and strike our secret roots in darkness, and the foliage and the bloom will burst at length, and reproductive fruits drop ripely to the earth.

Meanwhile, what is to sustain our precarious patience ? What to help us in the arduous hour ? There is no support like that which we feel, when others in our sight have borne their burden well. Who would turn and flee when brothers near fight the good fight, and are resolved to finish their course ?

And as here we sit beneath the cross, we turn our eye upon the Prince of souls; we look on the extremity of trial; we see the sublimest of victories. Let us be of good cheer: the faithful have a living Leader in the heavens.

## Communion Address—II.

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To any one skilled in interpreting the self-contradictions of the human heart, the little company of Apostles assembled at the last paschal breaking of bread presents a study of rare and profound interest. Complete as the external circle looks, held together by a divine ascendancy felt in every part save one, it reveals, to an eye observant of its inner spirit, some struggling elements of unreconciled thought. The discipleship even of that chosen band was still, as it had always been, very imperfect. That wonderful Jesus of Nazareth was a constant perplexity to them; now provoking impatient doubts, and then subduing them to perfect trust; tempting them to think him common, and then kindling them as by a godlike presence; filling them with the glow of promise, and dragging them through the dust of ignominy; quoting the prophets, yet never satisfied to fulfil them. Before his face, beneath the look of that clear eye and at the sound of that winning voice, they were held fast by a mysterious power which they felt it were treachery to disown; which made life appear as a new thing to



them, and brought God closer to them by thousands of years. Nothing could be more absolute than his conquest of their affections, yet nothing more complete than his disappointment of their hopes. He was all that sanctity could aspire to be ; but did nothing that the Holy One of God was expected to do. So when they quitted his immediate presence, and were left to their own thoughts, or thrown among their neighbours' taunts,—when they were asked to say, ‘ What authorised hope, what splendid sign, led them captive to so poor a prophet’;—their mind misgave them and the answer faltered on their lips. They had been told to say, that ‘ The kingdom of heaven was at hand ’ ; but it did not look like it, when their Son of Man had not where to lay his head. They had felt in him the traces of a native royalty ; yet in the attempt to explain them, these seemed to vanish, and evade their words. For he had thrown every opportunity away : just when his fame was spread abroad, he suddenly wished to be alone ; when he might have been king, nothing could please him but a desert place ; and when he should have marched upon Jerusalem, he went up among the hills to pray. Who could wonder, that under so ambiguous a lead, they should make such little way ? were they indeed awake and in their sober mind ? or were they perhaps following the image of a saintly dream, from which they would rise to find that earth was lost and heaven not gained ?

Never would these misgivings be more sadly suggested and more passionately repelled, than during the few days preceding the crucifixion. The outward shadows of events had never gathered so deep upon their Lord; the inward light of God had never streamed in such glory from his soul. With hearts beating high they had approached Jerusalem; and when the Hosannas, which had sounded few and weak upon the open hill, swelled their tone with descent into the valley, and multiplied their voices, and echoed from the walls and towers,—the scattered garments, the waving palms, the city so deeply moved, had made them sure the hour was come when Jesus would delay no more. But alas! this final occasion he had thrown away: amid the very exultation he had been in tears; and had entered in triumph only to relapse into humiliation. And now the dangers of lost opportunity so thickened around them, that the throne which had formed the back-ground of their dream seemed mysteriously changing into the likeness of a cross. Yet, as their hope in him declined, their love for him increased; and if they had joined him for their own sakes in days of promise, it was now for himself alone that they “continued with him in his temptations.”

Perhaps they could give no clear account of their faithful tenacity; but they clung to him for reasons deeper than any words. They only knew that it was

a higher thing to remain by him and trust in him, than to doubt and go away. Never had his form so fixed their eye by its melancholy majesty, or his features seemed so transparent a veil between a heaven without and a heaven within ; or his sweet confiding converse appeared to reveal and yet to reserve so much. And so, had he himself set them free, they would have found the old life of arid comfort spoiled for them by the vision that had dwelt within their souls ; and would have returned to say, Lord, we cannot go ; "thou hast the words of eternal life." One only of them was there in whom the lower feeling of impatience for external success prevailed ; who resolved to coerce him out of his sublime and spiritual point of view, and force him into measures conspicuously worthy of his powers and suited to the condition of men's minds. Judas (believing no doubt that his Master, if duly pressed, would assume his Messianic power) was for being content with what was *practicable* and taking matters as they stood. He hated the favouring affection shown to the mystic and tender John ; and, while it was yet night, he rushed out, resolved to try whether reverence for the inner person or zeal for the outward business of Messiah should prevail in their counsels. The difference between those who, in the high things of duty and faith, follow the earthly judgment rather than the heavenly instinct, is represented in history for ever under the

contrasted images of Judas the traitor and John the saint.

Of us too, dear friends, this tale is told. Christ lives ideally in every disciple's soul. His image in our hearts is the centre of light which draws into it and around it whatever we feel to be holiest and best. In our thought he stands for the highest that has opened to our conceptions; for the life and mind which attracts our noblest aspiration, and looks down upon us with the most august authority. To emerge, like him, from the desert of our temptations, faint perhaps with the conflict, but serene in victory; to take freely home to us the very soul of self-renunciation, and ask nothing but scope to find the true, to love the good, and bear the chastisement of others' peace; to be inspired with courage to rebuke without passion, and with clear affection to pity without weakness; to look always through the clear eye that no disguise can dazzle, and no latent beauty escape; to keep a wakeful mind, patient of the constancy of duty and the vigils of prayer; so to dwell in God, that no path of space or time can be a way of exile, and the heavy cross and bleeding feet may be simply grievous to the body and not hurtful to the soul:—this is our last ambition, when lower clouds are swept from off our sight; this, our unquenchable thirst, when once the spring of life has touched and cooled our lips. This image of perfectness,—this Christ within the

mind,—holds us captive by its native authority, and wins us by its grace and truth, when only God is there to ask account of what we think. In lonely hours we lean upon it with perfect trust. In repentance, it turns its look upon us, and we know it to be true. In sorrow, we find that there is no calm and rest beside. And in death, if this appear not to float before the view, no angel will be there to conduct the passing soul. But at other times, when men are talking round us and no cock crows, how many faithless denials do we make! In face of the critical looks and questioning words of our companions, the divine thought becomes difficult to own,—not easy even to retain. We are unable to give account of it in form of speech; for it is itself a divine Word, and ours are human; and so we are tempted to distrust it,—to fancy it a dream,—to pronounce it far too high for mortal man,—and to press upon it lower and more practicable conditions. Fatal delusion of our baser mind! *Less* than the simply right and true can be nothing but the false and wrong. And if once we quit the Master-spirit, whose title to us we know to be entire, the power all goes out of us; the inspiration fades away; the sicknesses and infirmities of nature crowd upon us, but we can do no miracle; the scorpions sting again; the evil spirits of life rave and torment us, and we cannot cast them out; till at length, in the shame of mortified unbelief yet the relief of a

returning love, we hear the sweet forgotten voice saying, "Bring them hither to me."

If we have merited that sad appeal, "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?" ; if we have wandered from the Christ within the soul, this is our time,—this is our place of return. Again and again we may have lost our discipleship of heart, and in the haste and arrogance of self let slip the hand we had reverentially held. But again and again, after every failure, we must come back, with contrition, but without despair. Scattered on the several paths of our roving, we remember, each in his weary hour, that here is the rendezvous of our fidelity ; here our communion once more ; here the divine Guide, with whose will we are henceforth to harmonize our own, and which it is a vain attempt to reduce to ours. This hour is to be hospitable to the holiest messenger of God ; to make ready the guest-chamber in the upper dwelling of our hearts ; and to shut out, amid the converse of blessed thoughts, the voices of men and the threatenings of sorrow. Let pure and perfect trust fill all the room ; let the Judas-element of our soul rise and quickly pass into the night ; and the love that remains rest there, with freer surrender, on the form of heavenly sanctity, without the chilling eye of a traitor in the midst.

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